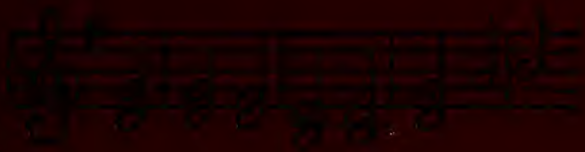


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The Joy
of Salvation

By Johnston Lemont, M.A.

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THE JOY OF SALVATION.

By REV. T. ^{Lamont} JOHNSTON LAMONT.

Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit; then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee. Ps. 51:12, 13.



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Contents.

- I. WHAT IS THE JOY OF SALVATION?
- II. HOW THIS JOY MAY BE LOST.
- III. HOW THE LOSS OF THIS JOY AFFECTS THE LIFE.
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- V. HOW THIS JOY IS SUSTAINED.
- VI. FOR WHAT PURPOSE THIS JOY IS GIVEN.

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might be fulfilled in you, and that your joy might be full. Jn. 15:11.

Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. Isa. 12:5,

Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. 1 Pet. 1:3.

And Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, for I am called by Thy name, O Lord God of Hosts. Jer. 15:16.

The joy of the Lord is your strength. Neh. 8:10.

Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. Jn. 16:24.

Author's Preface.

THIS little treatise, written at leisure moments by the author, is sent forth on an errand of love to God's dear people of every name and denomination. This is done with the fervent hope and prayer that it will prove helpful to all; that those who are not consciously possessed of the joy of salvation may be led into its possession; that those who may have lost the blessing, through the manifold trials and temptations of life, may be assisted in recovering the blessing; and that we may learn the secret of its sustenance in the soul.

The author does not claim to have given an exhaustive treatment of the subject. The book only touches (in most instances very briefly) some of the most salient points of christian experience. No attempt has been made in the way of elaborate illustration. We have dealt almost exclusively with principles and facts.

In the formation of his views the author has been guided strictly by the Word of God as the basis of all right religious belief. In every instance, however, he has written from the standpoint of personal experience. This is true even as to the loss and subsequent restoration of the blessing referred to. He feels satisfied that what he has herein written will be confirmed by the experience of many of the children of God.

The author feels most deeply that the experience herein described ought to be more common among the followers of

Christ as to the possession of this joy. Our lives are not what they should be, in the matter of power with God and with men, and in the matter of personal happiness and comfort, without this blessing. It is to be feared that the majority of church members are entire strangers to it. It is what we need to make our lives a song of praise, and a pean of victory.

There are few points that might be regarded as abstruse in their character. The aim has been to maintain simplicity of thought and expression throughout. No special theory has been advocated. The Lord leads in a thousand different ways. No two follow exactly the same path in climbing the mountain of joy. The main inquiry is, Are we in possession of this joy of salvation? And, if not, Are we willing to seek it with all our heart? The Lord, by his Spirit, will meet each one more than half way in bestowing the blessing.

Respectfully,

T. J. L.

CHAPTER I.

What is the Joy of Salvation?

THE only satisfactory answer to this question is to be found in the scriptures. Our individual opinions are worth nothing except as based on the teachings of the Word of God. The Bible is our best authority on such an important subject. Let us carefully examine some of its statements.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

In Eph. 1:7, we read, "In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." The same thought is brought out in Col. 1:14, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." It is possible, therefore, to receive forgiveness of sin. The christian is one whose sins have been washed away. He is not saved *in* his sins, but *from* them. This blessing comes to us through

Christ's blood. It rests upon the atonement. Of Mary's child it was said by the Holy Spirit before his birth, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people *from their sins*. This was his great mission in coming to our world. This forgiveness must be received by faith. There is no other way in which it can be received. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1.)

The Psalmist says, "Blessed is he whose sin is covered." (Ps. 32:1.) That is, taken out of sight, covered in God's way, not in ours. "He that covereth his sin shall not prosper." (Prov. 28:13.) When God says to us, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," (Jer. 31:34.) it is our privilege to take this comforting assurance to our hearts and rest upon it. Isaiah was able to say, "For Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back." (Isa. 38:17.) If we are the disciples of Christ we may say the same of ourselves without the least presumption. Of our sins it is said, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." (Ps. 103:12.) Surely if Christ "bore our sins in his own body on the accursed tree," we have no right to them, and it is

wrong for us to be troubled about them. Only let us make sure that we have acknowledged them in the spirit of true repentance, and we need have no fear. "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn. 1:9.)

Under the ceremonial law this blessed fact was signified by confessing the sins of the people over the head of the scapegoat, which was then sent into the wilderness, never to return. Their iniquities were carried away. Who could find them? Who wanted to find them? No Israelite was ever known to search for the scapegoat that he might recover possession of his sins. Yet many christians resurrect them and cling to them as if they were costly treasures.—

No man can be happy who is carrying about a great load of guilt. It is too much for any mortal to bear. The sinner cries out for relief. With Paul, he says, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24.) And he cannot be joyful until he is able also to say with the Apostle, "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord." (Rom. 7:25.) Then it is that he begins to realize that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:1.)

This forgiveness is actual and present, and not merely prospective. To have even the assurance that at some time in the future our sins will all be forgiven would be sufficient reason for joy, but God affords us better comfort than this. His salvation is a present salvation. We do not need to wait till we get to heaven to have the joy of the Lord fulfilled in us. We have blessed foretastes of that fullness of joy even here in this world. When once we realize this blessed fact we can hardly help but be happy. And we are worth nothing in the service of Christ until we come to the possession of this blessing. Many christians are living without this comfort because they have not the faith to accept the divine assurance. Is it not wrong thus to live?

THE GOSPEL IS GLAD TIDINGS.

What is the meaning of the sacred message which God has commissioned us to publish? It is "glad tidings of great joy." The gospel finds its main significance in the fact that it offers the free pardon of all sin to them that believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The sinner is bound hand and foot by the arch enemy. The Savior comes to his rescue. He strikes off his shackles. He delivers him out of

bondage. He opens the prison door and sets him at liberty. He heals his wounds and bruises. He speaks words of comfort to his heart. He lifts him to his feet and renews a right spirit within him. It is the object of the gospel to make known this blessed tidings, that such things are possible, that Christ is "able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him," that God "hath laid help upon one that is mighty to save," that he came "to seek and to save the lost," that through him we may receive everlasting life.

There is no book more full of joyful thoughts and assurances than the Bible. From beginning to end it is the announcement of glad tidings. Its promises are given for this purpose. Its precepts are designed for this end. Its historical facts are related for the encouragement of believers. Yet many christians are far from possessing the joy of salvation. Why is it? Is there any good reason for this failure? Does the fault lie in the scriptures, or in us? Is it not simply because we hesitate to take God at his word? because we are fearful of being presumptuous? or because we have never heartily confessed our sins? Perhaps it is because we have not had a right understanding of the gospel.

A southern slaveholder decided to free an old man who had served him long and faithfully. Accord-

ingly he had the necessary papers made out. Just before leaving on a long journey, thinking of the joy he was about to bestow on the old man, he placed the papers in his hand. The train carried him to a distant part of the country where he was occupied in business matters for two years. When he returned, what was his surprise to find the old slave still working for him and living on the place. He asked him why he was there. The old man was indignant that his master should think he would run away. "But," said his master, "what did you do with the papers I gave you?" The old man produced them. Then he explained their meaning, that they made him a free man. He leaped and danced with joy. For two years, although really a free man, he had lived and felt like a slave, and all because he could not read. Are not many christians in this condition as to the forgiveness of their sins and the salvation of their souls, and for a similar reason, because they have not read their bibles aright? God has forgiven them, but they continue to live as the slaves of sin.

ADOPTED INTO GOD'S FAMILY.

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the spirit of

adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Rom. 8:15.) "But when the fullness of times was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. 4:5, 6.) "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. * * * * Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth yet appear what we shall be." (1 Jn. 3:1.) "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. 8:17)

Surely it ought to afford us great joy to feel that we are members of the household of God, that God really sustains to us the relationship of a Father, that we stand on the same level with Christ as "joint heirs." Do we realize this blessed fact? Is it not one of the essentials of the joy of salvation? We have an inheritance, but that is not all; we have a heritage. The estate is ours to enjoy here and now. The will has been probated, and it is being executed now. "All things are yours."

Have we ever sat down quietly to reflect upon these things? Have we taken the Word of God in

hand and compared scripture with scripture to ascertain just where we stand as God's dear children? If not, how can we expect to have the full joy of salvation? We need to look up our privileges and consider our possessions. Does the Spirit beget within us that sweet cry, Abba, Father? Do we know just what sort of a home we have? Or have we simply been expecting to enter that home when we die? O, child of God, if that be the case, you are robbing yourself of great comfort and happiness.

And God is a loving Father. His infinite heart goes out in tender compassion toward those who have accepted His Son. There is no good thing that He will withhold from them. The storehouse of heaven is at their command. The "exceeding great and precious promises" are all intended for you. Do you believe them? Do you enjoy the blessings they offer? The Father's love is shed abroad in the hearts of believers. Are our hearts thrilled with that sweet music? Or are the strings of the harp broken and displaced?

THE INDWELLING SPIRIT.

"What, know ye not that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom

ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19.) "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16.) "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Rom. 8:9.) "For as many are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. 8:14.) "Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak concerning himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come." (Jn. 16:13.)

There is no doctrine of the Word of God less perfectly understood than that of the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is lost sight of in the gifts of the Spirit. We want the fruit of the Spirit, but are not so ready to ask for the Spirit himself. Yet this is what we need. Doubtless many are made the subjects of His power who do not realize His presence. But His operations are greatly hindered by our lack of faith in His sovereign presence. He is a person, just as truly as the Son or the Father. He is much more than an influence. The believer's heart is His dwelling place.

"Be filled with the Spirit." (Eph. 5:18.) The

early disciples were filled and refilled with the Spirit. They felt that they had no power except as He gave it. They depended continually on His guidance. It is He that regenerates the soul, that opens the eyes of our understanding, that directs us in the path of duty, if only we are willing to be led and will seek His guidance.

The theory that there is no necessity for praying for the Spirit as a special gift is a very delusive one. He may be present in the world as an atmosphere, and doubtless it is true that many are the subjects of His operation who are entirely unconscious of the fact. Nevertheless, He dwells in individual hearts in answer to specific prayer for His presence. This is testified to by too many to be questioned. It is distinctly enunciated as the doctrine of scripture. The passages above quoted are sufficient evidence of this, although others might be given.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance.” (Gal. 5:22, 23.) Joy is one of the fruits specified. Has your soul never been thrilled with heavenly raptures? Have you never rejoiced in spirit as you have attained to some new and richer experience of God’s truth? This gift of the Spirit is the supreme joy of the soul. It is an inde-

scribable pleasure. It is called "joy in the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 14:17.)

POWER FROM ON HIGH.

In Acts 1:8, we are told, "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you." The possession of spiritual power, power to do good, to do God's will, ought to be a perennial source of pleasure to the soul. His gifts are all designed to lift the soul to and prepare it for the higher joys of heaven. It must exalt one's feelings to know that he is used of God in the accomplishment of His purposes in the world. Who so full of joy as he who is continually leading souls to Christ? "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head; they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." (Isa. 51:11.)

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. And

he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." (Rom. 8:26, 27.) It is only through the medium of the Spirit that we can commune with the Father. He it is that moves our hearts to prayer. He it is that fills our souls with the delights of worship. Our meditations on the divine word are made sweet and precious by His gracious expositions. It is He that "opens our eyes to behold wondrous things out of God's law." He has led us in our christian experience. Those hours of communion so delightful to the heart were times when He was peculiarly present to assist and enlighten and bless.

What privilege more joyful than that of communing with our heavenly Father? Can we ever worship, in the true sense of the word, without having the spirit of joy in our hearts? Worship is the expression of the heart's joy in God. As it affords pleasure to converse with one who is above us in intellectual and social qualities, so, only in infinitely higher measure, it must greatly increase our joy to commune with the Father of our spirits. The christian would delight to spend all his time in the enjoyment of this high privilege. Many are led thus to neglect the practical duties of life. Not a few are chargeable with religious dissipation.

But, of course, there can be no true spiritual enjoyment when duty is neglected. Hence such conduct is usually its own corrective. The Spirit prompts to activity in the service of Christ, in the salvation of souls, as well as to worship. But, other things being equal, the richest pleasure of which the soul is capable is found in the hours of devotion.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

Akin to this is the fellowship of christian hearts. Souls full of the love of Christ are always congenial. We need and enjoy each other's sympathy. We depend upon each other for counsel and support. Between christian hearts there ought always to be such a measure of freedom that their fellowship will be marked by the most expressive joy. Not only will this manifest itself in times of trial and adversity, but also in prosperity. In true christian fellowship there is an entire elimination of envy, jealousy, strife and bitterness. One of Paul's reasons for thankfulness in behalf of the Philippians was the fact of their fellowship in the gospel. (Phil. 1:5.) John says, in his first epistle, (1:5.) "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,

and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." One who has the light wants to communicate it to others. You cannot keep a happy christian heart silent. It will find some way of telling its joy abroad. Hence we find that brethren in Christ are drawn together.

And God delights in this spirit of fellowship. In Mal. 3:16, we read: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord harkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." Christian reader, if you are not in the habit of talking freely about your spiritual needs and joys to your brothers and sisters in Christ, just make trial of it and see how it will kindle anew the flame of love in your soul. There are so many that need this sort of help, too. If we are members of the same household, surely we should be on speaking terms with all its inmates.

FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST.

This leads us to a higher plane. The Savior deigns to have personal fellowship with his followers. He communicates himself to those who believe on his name. Not one of them is beneath his

notice or consideration. Is it a privilege to hold converse with one of earth's kings? Are we flattered with the attention of earthly royalty? It is our joy to commune with the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He sits upon the throne with the Father. Listen to his words: "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (Jn. 14:21.) Again, in the 23d verse, he says: "If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." This thought is re-echoed in Rev. 3:20: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

What greater joy could we have than this? The loving Jesus is willing to dwell in my poor unworthy heart! Can anything restrain my joy when I think of this? We may thus talk with him as our elder brother. What comfort we ought to experience in every trial and distress!

And what does he mean by those words, "I will manifest myself to him?" Will he reveal himself in some peculiar and inexpressible way to my soul? That is what he seems to intimate. Do we not at

times enjoy these special manifestations of the Savior to our souls? Are there not occasions when we have clearer apprehensions of Christ and of his truth? times when he appears to us as "the chief among ten thousand and the One altogether lovely?"

And what does he mean by offering to "sup with us?" To sit at meal with one, especially if it is by invitation, is one of the highest enjoyments of friendship. In this case, although he provides the meal, he is the guest. That bestows double honor on us. And, after all, it is entirely for our benefit. Yet, in some sense, the Savior seems to need his disciples. "That where I am, there ye may be also." O, wonderful words! How expressive of tenderness and love!

This is an important part of the joy of salvation. But it is something more.

IT IS CHRIST'S OWN JOY.

"These things have I spoken unto you that *my joy* might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (Jn. 15:11.) It is something more than the result of a series of acts or of accumulated knowledge and experience. It is imparted unto the soul. It is the divine benediction. Christ said to his disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my

peace I give unto you." (Jn. 14.27.) This peace was something more than the resultant of preceding operating causes. It came direct from the Savior. So this joy is an ecstasy of soul that has its origin in the Savior alone. No one can receive it but those on whom he chooses to bestow it. It suffuses the natural joy of the heart, under the influence of spiritual causes, and intensifies it in such measure as to make it unspeakable and full of glory. It is the crowning blessing of the soul.

It is the Savior's good pleasure, however, to grant this joy unto all his disciples. He is not partial in the distribution of his favors. He "will withhold from us no good thing." (Ps. 84:11.) It is a part of our inheritance in him. It is a component element of salvation. Therefore each one may ask and receive it for himself. It is the signet ring bestowed upon us by the Master, the seal of our acceptance with him.

THE POSSESSION OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

Truth is designed to terminate in character. While it would be wrong to look upon ourselves with self-complacency, no matter how great our attainments, yet there is a sense in which it may afford us pleasure to know that we are in the right

path, the way that leads ultimately to glory, that we are building spiritually upon the right foundation, that we are making progress in the christian life. This may be considered as constituting a part of the joy of salvation.

It is questionable whether one can know the very first elements of true happiness without the possession of christly character. All true manhood begins and ends in Him. The end to be subserved in the carrying out of the great plan of salvation is to make men like Him. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 Jn. 3:2.) In the Day of Judgment men are to be judged "according to the deeds done in the body," and Christ plainly teaches that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." That is, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." In other words character is what tells, both in this world and in that to come. The whole aim of the church as established by Christ is to make true men and women. It is strange that any other idea of the church should ever have been entertained.

The possession of such a character must enhance our joy. The Father looks upon such with the love of complacency. The consciousness of this will add materially to our happiness. To know that we are counted with the friends of God, to

feel at home with the angels and saints in their ascriptions of praise to the Lamb as they surround the throne, to be conscious of the fact that we are co-workers with God in seeking the world's elevation, surely this ought to fill our souls with raptures almost divine.

THE WORD IN THE HEART.

The Word of God, received in faith, is in the heart as a well-spring of joy. What did the Savior say to the woman of Samaria? "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

* * * * * Whosoever drinketh of this water thirsteth again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (Jn. 4:10, 14.) He that truly drinks of the cup of salvation experiences a joy that is "unspeakable and full of glory;" he has a peace that "passeth all understanding."

Every convert knows somewhat of this joy of salvation. How our soul was thrilled when first we came to Jesus, and the love of God was shed

abroad in our hearts! What pleasure we took in worship and christian service! How we delighted to read the Bible and to engage in prayer! The sacred page was illuminated with heavenly light as we read it. With the Psalmist, each one could say, "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit; out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God; many shall see and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." (Ps. 40:2, 3.) And this joyful feeling has increased as the years have rolled on, if we have been true and faithful. We have realized, in some measure, the answer to that wonderful prayer of the Apostle Paul, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your heart by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." (Eph. 3:14-19.)

A SPECIAL BLESSING.

Another element in this joy, as it enters into the experience of not a few, is what is variously denominated as "Christian Perfection," "The Higher Christian Life," the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit," "Full Assurance of Faith," etc. Sometimes it is also called a second conversion; but this is an unwarranted designation of the experience. The only possible second conversion there can be is of the nature of a reclamation from a backslidden state.

That there is such a thing as receiving a special blessing from God, in an increased measure of the gift of the Spirit, cannot be doubted. Many christians testify to this as a matter of experience. It is folly for one who has not had this experience to hold that it is impossible, on the ground that he has never been thus blessed. Good and reliable testimony has been given on this subject which we are not at liberty to reject without examination.

The experience spoken of has nothing in it of the nature of "perfectionism." It leads to anything but the feeling that you are without sin. It consists mainly in the apprehension and reception of Christ as our holiness, in the realization that he has done all that is required to be done in order to

our sanctification, and that the way to true holiness lies in thus accepting and apprehending him. It is simply fullness of salvation through full trust in Christ.

It does not follow that one cannot be a christian without this special blessing. As a matter of fact, but few christians, comparatively, enter into the enjoyment of this blessing. It is their privilege to do so, but they have never reached that degree of faith and consecration necessary in order to its realization.

There is no limit to the measure of blessing that God is willing to bestow upon his believing people. It is wholly a matter of faith on our part. Blessing ought to follow blessing in the christian life. We ought to have joy added to joy, peace flooding the soul, life superadded to life, grace upon grace. Each successive blessing will of course increase our joy in Christ.

CHAPTER II.

How this Joy May be lost.

TO have possessed a treasure and then to have lost it is not only unfortunate, but also very annoying. We are filled with regret and anguish just in proportion to its value. The woman who had lost one of her ten pieces of silver lighted a candle and swept the house and sought diligently until she found it. She had nine pieces left, however; hence she was not utterly cast down. But he who loses the joy of salvation has virtually lost every other blessing. He can enjoy nothing else, however desirable in itself, until the lost blessing is recovered. He is a wanderer, without a home and without comfort. His days are passed in the darkness. There is a deep unrest in his soul which the world, with all its glittering frivolities, can never heal, and which threatens his eternal peace. The temptation at such a time is to be occupied with the loss and to become gloomy over it, instead of trying to find a way out of the labyrinth of dis-

truss into which the soul has fallen. How true it is, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways" (Prov. 14:14.)

THE FACT THAT THE BLESSING MAY BE LOST.

Christian experience testifies to this. There can be no doubt about it. The Psalmist recognizes this in his prayer, "*Restore* unto me the joy of Thy salvation." All christians have times of declension. We do not mean to say that they could not be avoided. It is unquestionably sinful to fall into such a condition. Elijah lost heart and became discouraged, even to the point of praying that God would take his life. It was then that he fled from the face of Jezebel, and hid in the cave of Mt. Horeb. David was often cast into the slough of despond, and had to cry unto God for deliverance. Very few of the Old Testament worthies maintained uninterrupted communion with God. The chosen people of God were always backsliding. "Why then is this people of Jerusalem slid- den back with a perpetual backsliding?" (Jer. 8:9.) We do not seem to find absolute and perfect deliv- erance from the law of sin that is in our members, that wars against the law of the mind, and brings us into captivity to the law of sin and death. (Rom.

7.) But in every instance we are to blame for the cessation of this joy in the soul.

LIVING IN KNOWN SIN.

Do christians ever do this? We are very sorry to be obliged to make the acknowledgment. But facts sustain the averment. It is doubtful whether christians commit what we call willful sins, in distinction from those that are done in ignorance or through weakness of the flesh. Usually we are entrapped or deluded into the commission of sin. It is against our better judgment, and in the face of our nobler impulses. God judges us by the ruling purpose of the soul. The great question is, What is the trend of our lives? Is it upward or downward? Is it in harmony with God, or in conflict with his plans?

Certainly no one can maintain peace with God while he consents to the reign of sin in his heart. The attitude of the christian must ever be that of antagonism to the evil propensities of his nature. Like his Master, he must seek to destroy the works of the Devil. How can one be joyful in any proper sense while he is allowing himself to walk in sinful ways? It would be impossible. This joy comes from God. Would He impart it to one living in

open sin? Certainly not. It would not only be presumptuous to have faith under such circumstances, but it would be impossible to do so. Faith cannot be exercised at will, without reference to the life.

The Apostle John tells us something about this in his first Epistle (3:21, 22). He says, "*Beloved, if our heart condemn us not*, then have we confidence toward God, and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." That evidently means that we cannot have true faith without a good conscience. It means that we must live right if we would have access to the throne of grace. Not that we are required to be perfect, but that our motives must be pure, that our actions must spring from good purposes, that we must be honestly trying to do his will. Obedience is and always will be the test of character. "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." (Ps. 66:18.) If we are conscious of having sinned, we must first get rid of it by confession and repentance. Perhaps this will explain why so many of our prayers remain unanswered. The day is past when men can live in sin and claim to be children of God. However perfect our acquaintance with the creed of our

church, or with the Bible itself, if we are destitute of christian character we are not the disciples of Christ. The upright man is the one who is strong spiritually. His faith in Christ makes him upright as a matter of necessity. He knows that without holy living he cannot exercise faith. Hence the allowance of sin is a positive barrier to spiritual progress.

SECRET SINS.

Sometimes we fancy that if our sin is not publicly committed, that if it is not known, we may still be joyful in God. A moment's reflection will reveal the futility of such a claim. It is not a question of legal or ceremonial restraint. Sin of any kind, whether open or secret, is an effective barrier to the possession of happy feelings. The will cannot override the fact of sin. God sees, if man does not. He sees, even when we seem to be utterly and perversely blind as to the fact. Sin is deceitful. It blinds the judgment and hardens the heart. It gnaws at our vitals, whether open or concealed. We often have need to say with the Psalmist, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." (Ps. 19:12.)

ESPECIALLY ANGER, IMPATIENCE AND PASSION.

Ought the christian ever to grow angry? Ought he ever to become impatient? Ought he ever to allow himself to become the victim of passion, in the sinful sense? There may be extenuating circumstances that will lead God to be lenient in dealing with us after yielding to these infirmities. Of that there can be no doubt. He is willing to forgive and to cleanse. Nevertheless, it will be found practically that these weaknesses (if we characterize them by so mild an epithet) are a great hindrance to us in the simple matter of christian enjoyment. It is only as we are struggling against them and willing to acknowledge them that we can continue in the divine favor. Grace ought to enable us to overcome in all these respects, and it will if we are true in spirit. But when inordinate and passionate feelings are not held in check we soon discover that the Spirit is grieved from our hearts only to return when our spirit is humbled and made penitent. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-

hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Eph. 4:30-32.)

UNBELIEF.

But the chief cause that operates in the loss of the joy of salvation is unbelief. We doubt the fulness of the promise. We question the willingness of the Savior to save to the uttermost. We doubt the efficacy of the truth to effect our complete deliverance from the enthrallment of sin. We think it would be presumption to assume, even on the basis of divine assurance, that we are really and actually saved. With many it is esteemed a proof of merit not to allow one's self to rest in the love of Christ. We are afraid to venture on the promise, to reach out the hand of faith to receive the gifts of grace and salvation. We underestimate the father's love. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32.) "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation,

or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? * * * * Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us *from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (Rom. 8:33-39.)

This is the language of faith, of trustful assurance. Unbelief keeps us back from thus peacefully resting in the divine love. If we really believed that nothing could separate us from the love of God in Christ, there would be no room for doubt or consequent unhappiness. When faith is bright and unclouded all is bright and happy. "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." (Heb. 3:12.) It was unbelief that kept Israel from possessing the Promised Land. (See Heb. 4:6.) "Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." (v. 11.) Unbelief is undoubtedly the crying sin of the church and of the world.

THE CENSORIOUS SPIRIT.

Faultfinding is never commendable. As a rule it does more harm than good. The spirit of criticism, even when there seems to be just ground for it, will rob the soul of peace and spiritual comfort. Generally it indicates, too, that the one who is given to it is a backslider in heart. We cannot assume to control others by our conscientious scruples. We have no right to set up a standard of conduct that is not clearly authorized of God. And even when it is so authorized, it is unwise to be continually reminding people of their shortcomings. It begets resentment and alienation of feeling. In the end it will deprive us of all influence for good. The minister of the gospel is authorized to do some things in this direction, in the way of rebuke, which the private christian had far better leave entirely to him. If we could only always tell people their faults in love for their souls, it might be different. That, however, is not censoriousness.

The Spirit dwells only in loving hearts, in hearts attuned to God's praise, in souls obedient to His behests. We can have the censorious spirit only as we are disobedient to His movings. It is impos-

sible that we should do this and continue to have the joy of salvation. The only way to induce men to give up sin is by showing them something better. Harsh rebukes only confirm the soul in wickedness.

ANXIETIES, PERPLEXITIES, TROUBLES.

These annoy just in proportion as we are lacking in faith. The christian ought to be able to rise above them. There are times, however, when it seems almost impossible to do so, times when we are predisposed to cherish them. It is only as we have learned how to cast our cares upon the Lord that we can retain our joy in face of them. The temptation is to fix the eye too intently on our troubles. We cannot look at them and keep our eyes on the Savior at the same time. We are apt to forget that Christ is willing to bear these distresses for us; but he cannot do so unless we are willing to relinquish our hold on them. Paul rejoiced in tribulations and persecutions. The more he suffered the more he rejoiced. In these days there are not many who can live in the spirit of the Master's words: "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men

shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. *Rejoice and be exceeding glad*, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Mat. 5:10-12.) We should be able to say with the Psalmist, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou wilt revive me." (Ps. 138:7.) "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed." (Rom. 5:3, 4.)

The difficulty arises not so much from the troubles themselves, as from the way in which we receive them. If endured in a submissive spirit they lose their power to cast down. Faith is the remedy.

ILL HEALTH OR LACK OF SUFFICIENT SLEEP.

Many spiritual ills may be traced to physical causes. The body exerts a marked influence on the soul. Disease often, and very unnecessarily, robs us of joy and comfort. And yet, some of the greatest triumphs have been won in this respect by the suffering children of God. If we were asked to point out the most patient and submissive spirit known to us, it would probably be that of one who

has been the greatest sufferer. Such an one has learned the secret of the Lord which is "with them that fear Him." The depression of soul which often casts us down, and brings a cloud over our experience, may often be remedied by a physician's prescription. But one can learn to understand his own case and thus be enabled to rise above the tendency to depression or despondency.

Spiritual languor and darkness may also be traced, at times, to the fact that we have been deprived of needful bodily rest in the way of sleep. The most restful, trustful and joyous souls, other things being equal, are those which inhabit healthy bodies, bodies that have been duly recuperated by "tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep." We are not to be sluggards ; but the Lord knows that a certain amount of sleep is indispensable in order to true happiness of soul. So "He giveth his beloved sleep."

NEGLECT OF CHRISTIAN DUTY.

"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." (Jn. 14:21.) "If a man love me he will keep my words." (Jn. 14:23.) Obedience is the test of discipleship. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your

own selves." (Jas. 1:22.) "And he said unto them, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23.) "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." (Luke 9:24)

There is such a thing as making too much of duty, in the form of legalism, but there can be no question that many christians rob themselves of the joy of salvation by unwillingness to do what the Lord requires of them. We are not justified on the basis of our good works, but our happiness depends not a little on our engaging heartily in them. A part of the joy of salvation is the gathering in of the harvest. If we are not contributing our share toward the accomplishment of the work, how can we feel satisfied? Must there not be a measure of discontent when we see the fields "white to the harvest" and yet we are standing idly by and leaving others to do the work? Does not God say to us, if that be true, "Why stand ye here idle all the day long?" Will He bestow his blessing upon us, under these circumstances? Certainly not in sufficient measure to entitle it to be called "the joy of salvation." We may rejoice in seeing

souls brought into the kingdom by others, even if we have done nothing ourselves, but it will be far from "fulness of blessing" such as here referred to.

We need christian work of some kind to keep our faculties alert, to kindle the fires of devotion, to enable us to enter into sympathy with the Savior, to keep our souls in touch with mankind ; but this work is necessary in order to bring men to Christ. We must share in it if we are the children of God. We will find our joy fast diminishing if we cease to labor in the vineyard, Lack of employment in the service of the Master explains much of our despondency and spiritual indifference. Every child of God should find something to do for Jesus. It is one of the safeguards of christian experience. "Satan still some mischief finds for idle hands to do."

We should regard it as one of our great privileges to be counted worthy to be co-laborers with Christ. To everyone is given at least one talent to be used to God's glory. The servant who hid his talent was met with rebuke and was beaten with many stripes. The disposition to excuse ourselves from undertaking work for Christ because of fancied or even real unfitness will certainly rob the soul of its joy.

DEPENDING ON A PAST EXPERIENCE.

It is well to be able to look back in our spiritual history to a time when we received special blessings at God's hand, when our minds were illuminated with heavenly light, when our hearts were all aglow with holy love and zeal, when our communion with God was sweet and precious. But that is not enough. Christianity is a life. The truth is designed to do a continuous work. We cannot be satisfied without making progress. There is something wrong in our idea of religion or in our method of manifesting it if we have not a present enjoyment of its blessings, a present experience of its power. Paul was of a far different spirit. He said, "Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto the things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:13, 14.)

If we daily meditate on the Word and hold communion with God we will not be depending on the past, however satisfactory it may have been. If we are actively engaged in christian work and are growing in grace, we will not be disposed to look back to some distant period of illumination and blessing for the evidence that we are the children

of God. That bright spot need not be forgotten or despised, but it ought not to be allowed to usurp the place of a present salvation. If it is so allowed we will inevitably lose our comfort and joy in Christ. It is Christ who saves us, not our experiences.

A NEGATIVE REASON.

Sometimes the loss of this joy is due to the operation of a negative cause. We fail to keep in mind the blessed truths and facts involved in salvation. Our memories are weak. We lose sight of the very truth or fact that is needed to bring us out of our darkness into the light. If we have not kept our minds refreshed by continual perusal of the Word, if we have been necessarily occupied with our worldly business, if we have been prevented by circumstances from engaging as much in prayer as we have been accustomed to, this may rob us of our comfort and joy. It is often the case that we are thus depressed in spirit, and perhaps we do not clearly understand the real cause of our distress. While we should always be conscious of the Savior's presence, yet the best christians sometimes yield to influences of this character. The necessary result is that they become dejected in spirit. All that the

soul needs is a new refreshing from on high, the privilege of christian fellowship, a new baptism of the Spirit.

QUENCHING THE SPIRIT.

In all the various ways referred to above we are guilty of quenching the Spirit. His monitions and behests should be most scrupulously obeyed. We are dependent on Him for the renewal of our spirits, for the perfection of our characters, for the power to render efficient service, for every thrill of heavenly joy that passes through the soul. Without His aid we cannot comprehend the meaning of the Word, or understand the will of God. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of salvation." (Eph. 3:30.)

"Let us, therefore, fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us the gospel was preached, as well as unto them; but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, If they shall enter into my rest; although the works were finished before the foundation of the world. * * * There remain-

eth, therefore, a rest to the people of God. * * * *
Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest
any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”
(Heb. 4:1-11.)

CHAPTER III.

How the loss of this Blessing Affects the life.

NATURALLY the loss of such a blessing will exert an unwholesome influence on the life. It is impossible, after having once experienced its thrilling influence, to be satisfied to live without it. Without it, there is a barrenness and lonesomeness in life which are positively unendurable. We hardly know what to do.

RESTLESSNESS OF SPIRIT.

This is probably the first conscious effect it produces. We roam about like wanderers, as those who have lost the way, as those who have been deprived of some great comfort. The soul becomes disconsolate. We lose that peacefulness and tranquility of soul which mark the experience of those who are still abiding in Christ. In other words, it is the loss of spiritual equipoise.

Peace is the natural heritage of the christian. Christ says to us, as he said to his disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid." (Jn. 14:27.) "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee because he trusteth in Thee." (Isa. 26:3) We cannot lose this peace without being consciously affected in our faith and experience.

Oh how pitiable is the condition of one thus deprived of God's blessing! Pastors can testify to this. Sometimes even at midnight they will be sent for to pray and converse with one who cannot sleep because he has lost the blessing. And these souls are generally so perturbed that but little can be done for them but to commend them to the Savior's compassion. It is very hard to bring them relief.

FILLED WITH THEIR OWN WAYS.

In Proverbs 14:14 we are told, "The backslider shall be filled with his own ways." As the loss of the joy of salvation is necessarily traceable to spiritual declension, and is therefore a species of backsliding, so we would expect to find this scripture

fulfilled in those who are in this condition. And facts sustain this expectation. The one who has lost his sense of the presence of God in his soul at once seeks to ascertain the cause. He begins to search his conduct, to scrutinize his habits, that he may find some way out of his distress. If this is done honestly and sincerely it will result in relief. But usually it is a disingenuous proceeding. We really know, in our hearts, what the cause of our trouble is, but we are unwilling to make the acknowledgment and the consequent renunciation that must follow if we would again be possessed of joy. And just in proportion as this unwillingness prevails will we be occupied with thoughts of ourselves. And to the extent that we are busied with these self-examinations without actual return to God do they strengthen their hold upon us. We become overwhelmed in a maze of trouble and perplexity.

We can find no joy in looking too long at ourselves. That necessitates the turning away of our eyes from him who alone can give us relief. "*Looking unto Jesus*, the author and finisher of our faith," should be the motto of the christian. The old saying is true, "If we look within all is dark, if we look without all is confusion, if we look up all is bright and clear." But this upward look must be

a look of faith. It is impossible to have much faith while we are looking at ourselves. The cloud that intervenes between us and the Sun of righteousness will sooner be discovered by looking up than by looking down. Yet the latter is just what we are apt to do when we have lost the joy of salvation. We go out to search for our Beloved, but He is not to be found. We return only to renew the profitless search in the wrong direction. We go to our friends or those who we think can help us and inquire if they have seen our Beloved and whither he has gone. All the while we forget that when he was waiting to enter the soul we refused to arise and open the door until it was too late. So we are filled with our own doings, instead of being filled with "the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

DISCOURAGEMENT IN WORK.

How hard it is to do christian work when the heart is not joyful! "The joy of the Lord is your strength." (Neh. 8:10.) It is only as we are "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man," (Eph. 3:16) that we can do God's work successfully. But one of the causes of our loss of the joy of salvation is the temporary withdrawal of the Spirit from the soul, or at least the withhold-

ing of his comforts. Hence we are measurably left to ourselves, which is equivalent to saying that we are deprived of our strength. For one to lose the consciousness of God's sustaining presence is to lose heart in the prosecution of his work. It is useless to try to do it. We cannot succeed in it till the blessing is restored. We may struggle against the feeling of despondency that creeps into the soul by sheer exercise of our will power, but the twilight will deepen into the darkness of midnight unless the daystar arise in our hearts.

But all feeling of discouragement is not to be traced to this cause. There may be reasons outside of ourselves for disheartenment. One cannot do much alone. It is only as we are supported and assisted by fellow christians that we can make some forms of christian work successful. It must induce somewhat of this feeling to see God's people unwilling to come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty, to see them indifferent when the harvest is ripe for the reaping.

FAILURE IN WORK.

This is more deplorable than mere discouragement, which only affects ourselves. We cannot do much execution with a sword that is blunted. We

cannot reap success when we are without true wisdom in the direction of our work. There must be disappointment in results when we are deprived of the leadings of the Spirit. At such a time, instead of being able, as it were, intuitively to decide upon the best means for the accomplishment of a particular work, we find ourselves hesitant and uncertain; we are lacking in spiritual decision.

It is one of the peculiarities of the christian religion that the success of our work depends not only on the adaptation of the means to the end, but on the spirit in which it is prosecuted. No one can do God's work who is not in harmony with God in thought and purpose. This often explains why one is more successful than another in doing the same kind of work.

What we need constantly to aim at is good results. The christian ought always to be successful, in the true sense of the word. It is sad to see him making repeated failures. How many are perishing while he is thus spoiling his opportunities! We should keep the armor bright. We should always be panoplied in it. We must not be content to have only one piece in readiness. We are directed to "put on *the whole* armor of God." He who has lost the joy of salvation has lost the shield of faith, and the breastplate of righteousness,

and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. What can he do but be stricken down by the enemy?

RELINQUISHMENT OF EFFORT.

This want of success will result ultimately, if the soul is not restored to its lost possession, in entire relinquishment of effort. Without joy we have no relish for the sacrifices and possible hardships involved in doing the Lord's work. Without some measure of success, of what use to continue effort? If we are sure to do things in the wrong way, what sense in trying to do them at all? Evidently our first duty and necessity is to bring our souls into a right attitude toward God spiritually before attempting service. If for any reason we fail in accomplishing this, we will soon desist from the effort of our own accord. In all this we will be committing deeper sin, because it is possible to find a way out of the difficulty. God stands ready to reveal that way if we are only willing to obey.

Christians have been known to live for years in this unsatisfactory condition. They may not lose hope of salvation. They live under a cloud. Life to them is simply an endurance. They have no

spiritual comfort. They are hoping against hope that in some way they will be brought back to the enjoyment of God's favor. If the difficulty is only one of unbelief, of reluctancy of faith, they may find relief by simply waiting, if they wait in expectancy of the blessing. But if the cause lie deeper, it will be necessary for them to probe deeper in order to its discovery and cure. If real longing of soul for the recovery of the lost blessing continue, it is evidence that the Spirit has not given us over to the hardness of our hearts, and that there is yet possibility of recovery. If they have relinquished effort for the sole reason that it seems to be useless, and not because the work is distasteful to the soul, there is reason to believe that they will yet be brought out of darkness into the light. But they are likely to withdraw entirely from special effort until their joy is restored.

PRAYER BECOMES COMPLAINT.

What a revolution has taken place in the soul when this is the case! Instead of praying for light and for direction as to the recovery of the lost blessing, we are apt, after a time, to be filled with murmurings. Thus we make of the throne of grace a tribunal of judgment at whose bar we arraign God

himself. And how bitterly the soul can complain under the influence of despondent feelings! Occasional expression of regret is proper in prayer, but to rend the heavens continually with our cries of distress is unnatural to the soul under right conditions. And the more we complain the deeper our darkness is likely to become. If at such times we could only cherish a submissive disposition, saying, "Lord, if it is Thy will that I should walk in darkness and discomfort, Thy will be done," perhaps the lost joy would return. But we are more likely to be impatient, and this means longer continuance under the cloud. There can be no joy in conjunction with rebellious and complaining thoughts.

When we discover that we are given to murmurings we should make the most strenuous effort to rise above them. We should betake ourselves to earnest prayer for deliverance. The disposition to yield to them is not a healthful spiritual indication. It indicates that the soul has lost its hold of faith, that there is a wall of separation between the soul and God, that we have erred from the path of duty.

OBSTINACY AND WILLFULNESS.

This is the more advanced stage of evil results caused by the loss of the joy of salvation. Not

having this joy restored we become angry with ourselves, with those about us, and, worse than all, with the Father himself. Not being able to force ourselves back into our former relationship of comfort and happiness, we become sour and morose. We try to make ourselves believe that, after all, the maintenance of this joyful state is a mere matter of will, of persistence, and the very effort thus to conquer peace develops obstinacy. And the worst of it is that we seem to be entirely unconscious of the fact that we are willful. We call it by another name. We say it is firmness or resolution. Let us not deceive ourselves. The one who has the joy of salvation in his heart is patient and meek and submissive.

SOME TEMPERAMENTS BECOME MISANTHROPIC.

This is true especially of the ardent and imaginative. They start out with a lofty ideal, but find it impossible to realize it. After repeated failures, they yield to despair. A sad melancholy steals over their minds. They fancy that all is surely going to ruin. Everything, according to them, is out of joint. Of course this is true, to some extent; but it furnishes no reason why we should lose heart or become disaffected. It is no reason why we

should express harsh judgment of those who do not come up to our standard. The very ones we condemn so severely are perhaps greatly disheartened because we are so unreasonable and uncharitable in our judgments. But, so far as we are concerned, matters become worse and worse, until we are totally alienated from even those who are trying to live right.

Analyze this feeling and you will find that it is rooted in unbelief. It implies a lack of faith in God with reference to his people. And where there is true faith in God there will also be faith in man. Jesus never became misanthropic, though he had sufficient ground for yielding to that feeling if any one had. People were far from coming up to his standard of living. Even his most intimate disciples failed him in his hours of need. Yet he was always peaceful, always hopeful, always kind in spirit.

SPIRITUAL DARKNESS.

This is the most disastrous effect produced by the loss of this joy. The Word is no longer a source of comfort and peace. The Savior himself, instead of being to us the Light of the world, becomes (in our estimation) the occasion of darkness. The sacred page is no longer illuminated with

heavenly light. We do not take pleasure in reading the Bible. We begin to slight it. This, in conjunction with the fact that we neglect prayer, leads the soul inevitably into darkness. The heavens become brass above our heads. The presence of the Spirit is not manifest in our hearts. We cease to love the fellowship of the saints. We seek more worldly company. We mingle in worldly amusements. The longer we stay away from God and the farther we wander the darker it becomes. This is necessarily the case.

Of course there are few who are so persistent in their controversy with God that they reach these regions of despair. They recover their joy before going so far. But some do get very far away from the heavenly rest. Oh, how much wiser to return to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls! How much better to seek forgiveness and restoration before wandering so far! But let us remember that these are the lost sheep "out on the mountains cold and drear," for whose sake the Good Shepherd is willing to leave the ninety and nine in order that he may find them and bring them back to the fold.

*THE FEELING THAT GOD IS UNWILLING TO
RECEIVE US.*

This is the hardest difficulty to overcome, as it is the natural result of all the other effects combined. We feel that we have forfeited the divine favor, and that there is no such thing for us as restoration. The difficulty is to forgive ourselves for being so perverse and unbelieving. The philosophy of its existence lies in the nature of conscience. The richer the blessings we relinquish the more self-condemned we feel. The fact that we have lost the blessing tends to destroy confidence in ourselves as able to retain it if restored, and therefore we do not seek it with much fervency of desire. If one were to turn his back upon heaven after enjoying its delights, (if such a thing is imaginable) he would hardly have the face or courage to knock at the door again for admission. Pride alone would keep him in outer darkness. So it is with reference to the loss of the joy of salvation. We know that we alone are to blame. We are ashamed of our heartless conduct. Hence we yield to the belief that it is useless to seek recovery of the lost treasure.

We should, of course, strive against yielding to this feeling. It is a mere feeling. It has its root

in the sensibilities. It is not a product of sound reason. It is not justified by scripture. The Bible is full of promises of an opposite character. Of the righteous it is said, "Though he fall, yet shall he not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." (Ps. 37:24.) "For a just man falleth seven times (that is any number of times), and riseth up again." (Prov. 24:16.)

This conviction is undoubtedly wrought in the soul by Satanic power. It is one of his devices to keep our souls in darkness. It is also, in some instances, strengthened by the statement in Heb. 6:4-6, to which we will refer in the opening of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

How the Joy of Salvation May be Restored.

THE possibility of its loss does not necessarily carry with it the impossibility of its recovery. So long as sin inheres in our natures will there be liability to change of feeling. So long as we have any measure of spiritual weakness left will we be exposed to the danger of falling. As intimated in the last chapter, we will be disposed to yield to the conviction that our case is hopeless if we have once been deprived of the blessing. This result works itself into our natures most insidiously. Let us therefore inquire,

IS IT IMPOSSIBLE TO RECOVER THE BLESSING?

In the epistle to the Hebrews (6:4-6) we find a statement that has served to confirm this feeling in the hearts of those who have lost the joy of God's presence. It reads, "For it is impossible for those

who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing that they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame." A passage of similar import is found in Heb. 10:26, 27: "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Another is that of 1 Pet. 2:20, 21, where it is said, "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

It is unquestionably true, as John says in his First Epistle, that there is "a sin unto death," for the pardon of which we are not authorized to pray. But, you will notice, he is careful to close with the assurance that "whosoever is born of God sinneth

not ; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." (1 Jn. 5:18.) Yet in the 16th verse he seems to imply that it is possible for a "brother" to commit the sin that is unto death. . "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death ; I do not say that he shall pray for it."

Without attempting, in this connection, a complete and exhaustive exposition of these scriptures, it is enough to observe (1) that if these words be taken literally in their most unfavorable sense, they apply only to those who have gone to the very extreme of sinfulness ; (2) that they refer to those who have distinctively rejected the Gospel of Christ ; (3) that those who have brought upon themselves this fearful penalty will have no desire to return to God, no sense of sin or loss. The Bible often addresses the christian as if it were possible for him to be lost, although Christ assures us that "no one shall be able to pluck them out of my hand." This sort of appeal is often the basis of moral incentive. Paul speaks of himself as being actuated by this sort of feeling in the words "lest I myself should be a castaway," although he knew he would never go to that extreme.

An examination of the plan of salvation will show that if the christian is lost the responsibility would rest upon Christ himself. No man can keep himself from falling; it is God that keeps all of us. Paul says, "I am persuaded that he is *able to keep* that which I have committed unto him against that day." (1 Tim. 1:12.) "The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul." (Ps. 121:4-7.) My security lies in the fact, not that I have got hold of Christ, but that *he has got hold of me*. If salvation depended on my strength to hold on I would surely fall; but if it depends on Christ's power to keep it is impossible that I should fall so as to be lost.

As to the passages in Hebrews, the writer is careful to say, "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." (Heb. 6:9.) The Hebrew christians were disposed to fall into a sort of legalism that subverted the Gospel. The writer seeks to lead them into the way of faith. They were more easily persuaded by the "terrors of the law;" hence he put the case in its strongest and most impressive light.

But the prayer of the Psalmist, on which our line of thought is based, implies distinctly and unquestionably that it is possible to have the joy of salvation restored after it has been lost. What more do we need? Is this not assurance enough? It is not at all likely that any one to whom the passages quoted above might have some possible reference will take the trouble to read this book or to make inquiry about the extent and heinousness of his sin. If the reader has any interest in perusing what we have to say on this subject he may safely regard himself as still within the bounds of hope and recovery. As elsewhere stated, our subject is not *the loss of the soul* and its restoration to salvation, but *the loss of the joy of salvation* and the restoration of that joy; two totally different questions.

So far as the method of recovery is concerned, one of the first essentials we would mention is

REPENTANCE OF KNOWN SIN.

If we are conscious of having fallen into sin, of course there can be no restoration of joy until it is taken out of the way; and the only way in which to get rid of sin is to confess it in the spirit of penitence. Forgiveness must be secured, and it is only on the basis of humble acknowledgment that God

will grant pardon. The Psalmist says, "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (Ps. 32:5.) "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn. 1:9.) It is impossible, in the very nature of things, for us to be joyful, in the spiritual sense, while clinging to some darling sin, or when we are unwilling to renounce it. It is not an arbitrary enjoinder on God's part. It could not be otherwise.

For a time a sin may not be seen or recognized; but as soon as discovered it becomes a source of discomfort and annoyance, and must be got rid of. The Spirit will not leave us long under its dominion without revealing the fact to the soul. Our prayer should be, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults." (Ps. 19:12.)

Following this, or in conjunction with it, there should be

BELIEF IN THE PARDONING LOVE OF GOD.

This faith must not be arbitrary or willful, but based intelligently on the divine assurance. When God says that He will forgive our transgressions He

means it, and it is sinful to doubt or question his willingness. When truly penitent He always bestows the blessing of forgiveness. It is ours to receive it, and this must be by faith. There will be no special sign from heaven indicating that we are forgiven. The joy will return only as we believe the promise.

There will be more or less of hesitancy in doing this. It is of the nature of sin to keep us in a state of unbelief. We must endeavor, with God's help, to rise above this disposition. We should bear in mind that it is our duty to believe God, even in face of our feelings and inclinations. Satan's stronghold is in the feelings. These are not reliable as guides. When we can place our finger on a definite promise of pardon, if we have fulfilled the conditions named, it ought not to be difficult to believe.

God delights to pardon and to restore to us our lost joy. He is ever waiting to be gracious. Let us not hesitate to accept his offered grace and mercy. "As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." (Ps. 103:13.) When our sin is forgiven we ought surely to be joyful. "*Blessed* is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. *Blessed* is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." (Ps. 32:1, 2.) "There is forgiveness

with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." (Ps. 130:4.)

DESIRE FOR ITS RESTORATION.

Of course this is indispensable. God does not bestow his blessings on those who do not want them, who do not long for them with unusual ardency. "Ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart." (Jer. 29:13.) It is, however, natural to desire the renewal of the joy of salvation after we have once tasted it. The soul can hardly forget the raptures with which it was thrilled when it received the Savior. "As the hart paneth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things I pour out my soul in me; for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of his countenance. * * * * I will say unto God, my rock, Why hast Thou forgotten

me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?" (Ps. 42:1-10.)

It is thus that we feel when the Lord hides his face from us. We long for the light of his countenance to rest upon us. We cannot be satisfied without the consciousness of his favor. All that will keep us from expressing this desire is the feeling that we are unworthy of it, and that we may again lose it, and thus be worse off than ever. The very fact that we have once lost the blessing will, indeed, make us liable to lose it again. The one who has once fallen under the power of some particular temptation is likely to yield at the second assault, and more so at the third. Some people stumble and stutter when they come to certain words through very fear of this result. So we are afraid lest our course will be the same as before, and this very fear helps to bring about this result. But we must seek the restoration of the blessing in order to its possession. We must desire it intensely or it will not be given.

ONLY GOD CAN BESTOW IT.

We must drop the notion that we can restore this joy for ourselves. This we can not do. Only God

can restore it. We must depend upon him for the renewal of the blessing. "*Restore unto me* the joy of Thy salvation." As the salvation is from God, so the joy of it must come from him. It can come only in answer to earnest prayer. The process is therefore one of faith. It rests upon the fulfillment of the promise. This means that it will be according to his good pleasure. But it is always his good pleasure to bless us when we are in a state of readiness to receive the blessing. Having, to the best of our knowledge and ability, done what is required of us, we must wait patiently the dawning of the light upon the soul, the flow of joy and peace into the heart. We must not be over-anxious or impatient or fretful, even if the blessing is long in returning. Like the Psalmist, we should say, "In the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth." (Ps. 57:1-3.)

SOME PRELIMINARY REQUIREMENTS.

It is far from being a question of good works ; nevertheless, there is a work of preparation needful. Let this preliminary work be thorough. Let nothing be hid from God. Of course nothing can be hid from him ; but we sometimes persuade ourselves that we can avoid revealing the whole of our offense. This is a serious mistake on our part. Our prayer should be, "Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Ps. 139:23, 24.) At the same time, we need to bear in mind the words with which the Psalmist introduces this Psalm : "O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising ; Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether." (v. 1-4.) We only perplex ourselves and delay the blessing by trying to conceal any part of our perfidy or unfaithfulness. Make a clean breast of it. Let not a shred of sin remain unacknowledged before the Father. That is the

utmost we can do, but it is the least that can be expected.

REVIEW THE PLAN OF SALVATION.

Clear views of truth are desirable at all times, but especially in seeking a restoration of the joy of salvation. Perhaps we have missed the way simply because our knowledge was deficient. We need to apprehend, for instance, that Christ is our all in all; that he is "made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." (1 Cor. 1:30.) We need to apprehend that only the "blood of Jesus Christ" can cleanse us from all sin; that "the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all," and "with his stripes we are healed;" (Isa. 53:5, 6) that he is "able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him;" that we are dependent on the Holy Spirit for every impulse of joy; that it is only through the medium of the truth that we can get back to a right position, and be made truly free; that "him that cometh unto him he will in nowise cast out;" that it is Christ's work, through the Spirit, to make us holy; that the life of the christian is wholly one of faith; that the design of the Father is that through the "exceeding great and precious promises," we should

“become partakers of the divine nature.” (2 Pet. 1:4.)

These and other essential truths and facts lying at the very foundation of the work of salvation need to be kept constantly before the mind. We need to measure them in all their fulness and significance, and possess our souls with the thought of them. With them will come the illumination of the Spirit and the consequent enlightenment of our souls which will result in our deliverance from the chains that have bound us.

OBEDIENCE TO THE SPIRIT.

“If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.” (Rom. 8:9.) “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:14.) “If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit.” (Gal. 3:25.) It is wonderful how much the Bible has to say about the Spirit’s guidance. The Apostles were constantly under his direction, not merely in the sense that they were inspired, but in the sense that they were directed in conduct. All christians are presumed to believe in this doctrine; but not all realize this blessing in their daily lives.

In returning to God we need to follow the lead-

ings of the Spirit most implicitly. He will direct if we will only follow. Step by step he will open the way before us as we seek to escape from the dark cavern in which we have been wandering, and will bring us into the full light of day, if we regard his behests.

Some christians are afraid of this doctrine, although it is so plainly taught in the scriptures. They are fearful of being led into fanaticism. There are dangers in this direction unquestionably, but not if we take the Bible as our guide and teacher. The one safeguard lies in understanding that the Spirit works in harmony with the revealed word. He never leads us to go contrary to that word. But he does not confine himself to the explicit directions of the word. There are circumstances when he must work independent of the word, if at all. When the Spirit directed Philip to go to the eunuch in his chariot, it was independent of any specific command of the word. So of others who, in Apostolic times, were led of the Spirit.

These inward monitions of the Spirit may be distinctly perceived and understood if we are walking with God in the spirit of obedience. Certainly in a matter so important as that under consideration we should be sure of the Spirit's guidance. This will assuredly be given in answer to believing

prayer. Following his directions implicitly we must find the right way of return to the possession of our lost joy.

ENTIRE CONSECRATION.

This is implied in what precedes. What is consecration but the spirit of obedience applied to every minutest detail of life? It is laying self and all we have on the altar to be used of God as he sees best to use us and our possessions. This is involved in the "willing spirit" mentioned in the Psalmist's words, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me *with a willing spirit.*"

This is the true christian spirit under all circumstances. The restoration of the joy of salvation is just restoring this true spirit. Then the result is sure to be of a joyful character. It cannot be otherwise. When the heart is right in God's sight, when the life is governed by his Spirit, when there is no conflict between our wills and his, there must be a pleasurable feeling in our hearts. This is the joy of salvation, or at least one of its constituent elements. Or, if we take the rendering "uphold me with a *free* spirit," it means a spirit that is free from worldly entanglements, from the element of disobedience, from the condemnation of God's law,

from the power of unbelief, from the yoke of bondage. This is the freedom wherewith Christ makes free; it is the liberty of the children of God. All this is involved in the act of consecration as its necessary result or accompaniment.

This consecration should be made deliberately, after the most thoughtful consideration of what it means. No thoughtless impulse will suffice. It means that the heart is fully set to do God's will. It is not to be of a merely temporary character. It is for all time. If it is only partial in character, it is not consecration at all. There should be no reserve. It should be made in faith, resting upon the divine assurance of aid to carry it out.

Such a consecration brings the soul very near to the Father in the most intimate of relationships. It brings heaven into the soul. It eliminates all conflicting principles and motives. It cannot but produce joy in the heart. But God adds his special blessing according to the promise.

THE COMMITTAL OF FAITH.

By this we mean the act or acts of obedience that naturally follow the act of entire consecration. When the Israelites were about to cross the Jordan in obedience to God's command, if they had sim-

ply expressed a willingness to go forward without actually doing so, there would have been no committal of faith. The waters did not open before them until their feet touched them. To have waited would have implied a lack of faith. The soul must be committed to God in the act of faithful obedience.

This is of the utmost importance in this connection. "Sanctify yourselves, for *to-morrow* the Lord will do wonders among you." The act of dedication is always followed by a *to-morrow* of blessing. Sometimes we fancy we are ready when we are not. But when fully prepared the blessing will not be slow in coming. If we stand the divine test, the divine approval is sure to follow.

The great question is, Are we ready? Is there no secret reservation that will prevent the coming of the blessing? If it delays we should renew our heart-searching to discover and rectify the difficulty. We will find that such consecration as we refer to can only be made by faith, as well as in faith. It is not a question of will power or self-command. The will is perverse and treacherous. We cannot depend upon it. God will not. It is rather *willingness* than *will* that secures the blessing. The act of consecration must be an act of love, not a mere act of duty. The truest obedience is not that

which has regard to command, but that which issues from the heart. This committal may seem hard to accomplish, but it is the best test of faith, and is therefore indispensable.

“Nothing before, and nothing behind,
The steps of faith
Fall on the seeming void, and find
The rock beneath.”

APPROPRIATING FAITH.

Appropriating faith attaches a personal meaning to the promises. It takes them as belonging to us individually, as intended for our benefit, as actually conveying to us the blessings of grace and salvation. I not only believe that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, but that he will reward *me* when *I* come to him in faith.

True faith is always of this character. It receives from God. Its prayers are answered. The blessing comes, and tarries not. We grow into its exercise. It is a part of the evolution of spiritual character. It is the fruit of the Spirit. When we are possessed of appropriating faith we will be able to say, with the Psalmist, “The Lord is *my* rock, and *my* fortress, and *my* deliverer, *my* God, *my* strength, in whom *I* will trust.” It is specific, in distinc-

tion from generic faith. It is the full realization that Christ died for *me*, that he rose again for *my* justification, that he ever lives to intercede for *me*, that he is *my* all in all. Without this kind of faith the promises are a dead letter to the soul. True faith says,

“Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find.”

CHAPTER V.

How the Joy of Salvation may be Sustained.

THIS is to some a very perplexing inquiry. They are fearful lest the treasure should in some mysterious way slip out of their hands. They question whether they will be able to keep it in their possession. This indicates that their understanding of the subject is imperfect.

IT IS NOT SELF-SUSTAINED.

While, in an important sense, it depends on our attitude as to faith and consecration, it depends wholly upon God. Christ gives us the Bread of Heaven and the Water of Life. The most that we can do is to eat and drink and enjoy the blessing. "The Spirit divideth severally to each man as he will." (1 Cor. 12:11.) The more anxiety we have about it the less likely it is to continue. The more we blow the live coal, without adding new fuel,

the sooner the fire becomes extinguished. The more we turn our gaze inward to contemplate our possessions, the sooner we lose sight of the Savior. Its continuance need not concern us at all. Does the child need constantly to be wondering whether his father loves him and will provide for him? Does it add any to his happiness to concern himself about these matters? On the contrary it is a hindrance, and helps to defeat the realization of his desires, for the father would almost resent such lack of confidence. We do not need to be in a constant worry as to whether the sun will continue to shine. That is his function.

NOT TO BE MADE AN AIM.

That is the surest way of preventing the soul from coming into its possession. That would make our lives selfish. The motive is an unworthy one. Do we love God simply because it makes us happy? Do we follow the Master only because of the loaves and the fishes? It is not wrong to find delight in the consciousness of the Savior's love, but if we are actuated only by the thought of our individual happiness, we will soon lose that sweet pleasure. We are to glorify God first, and then we shall enjoy Him forever. The joy of salvation is a fruit that

grows on the tree of life which it is our privilege to pluck and eat, but if we do nothing but stand under the tree and pluck the fruit we will soon be driven from the garden. We may admire the flowers that grow in the Father's paradise, but our time is not to be spent in plucking them and enjoying its beautiful walks.

There is a sort of spiritual dissipation that defeats itself. There is such a thing as making too much of our joys and comforts. If they keep us from service, from useful employment in God's vineyard, God, in his love for us, will see that we are deprived of them. It would be pleasant always to dwell with christian people, and never to have anything to do with unbelievers; to dwell in tents on the mount of transfiguration; but a part of our work in the world is to snatch men as brands from the burning. We have duties to perform. We are to do the Master's will and build up his kingdom. The less we think about happiness, the greater it is likely to be.

A STATE OF PASSIVITY.

The soul must lie passive in the hands of its Savior. Perhaps the word receptivity would convey our meaning more clearly. The mind is to be

kept in the attitude of willingness to receive the blessing and to use it to God's glory. So far as the divine operation is concerned, it is to be like clay in the hands of the potter. We are to be fashioned according to the divine will. The Lord sits over us as a refiner of silver, waiting only to see his own image reflected in us. Whatever is necessary in order to the accomplishment of this end we are cheerfully to submit to. We are not to question the wisdom of the process. We are to have no will of our own about it, except to coincide with the divine will. All opposition or antagonism is to be completely subdued.

This is no easy task to accomplish, as we will discover on making the effort. It requires a degree of spiritual courage and faithfulness that is not common. Yet, if we really desire the blessing and delight in doing God's will, we will not find it hard. If we really have confidence in the leadings of the Spirit, it will be easy.

CO-OPERATION WITH GOD.

All true spiritual living is co-operation with God. Without this no genuine results can follow. The highest and best results are secured only when we work perfectly in harmony with God. The main

element is God. Our agency is entirely subordinate and secondary. This spirit of co-operation makes us partners with the Father. It brings us into intimate relations with the Holy Spirit. It lifts us into real sonship. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do according to his good pleasure." (Phil. 2:12.) Ours is the position of empty vessels waiting to be filled, interposing no obstacle to the gracious work, but helping it on as far as in us lies. God is the fountain. It is ours to keep the channels clear so that the water of life may flow unhindered into our souls. We must do the drinking. This is the extent of our responsibility in the matter. That water will do its own work in quenching thirst and reviving our spiritual natures, if we do not prevent it.

This spirit of co-operation should extend to other interests outside ourselves. We must not forever be occupied with our own welfare and happiness. We have a work to do in the world. It is God's work. But it is most emphatically ours. Unless we do it, it will be left undone.

CONSTANCY IN PRAYER.

We are commanded to pray without ceasing. This is not an arbitrary requirement. There is

deep philosophy in it. Constancy of prayer keeps the mind constantly on God. This is what is needed. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." (Isa. 26:3.) The fire on the altar is never to be allowed to become extinguished. There must be uninterrupted communion with God, if there is to be uninterrupted joy. If we really love the Savior the soul will want to preserve its fellowship with him. Not only should we pray in the early morning, as we begin the duties of the day; not only at the noon hour, when we are in the midst of the day's occupations; not only at night, when the day's work is done; but at all hours, between times. We should live in an atmosphere of prayer. Prayer is our vital breath. It should come to us as natural and as easy as to breathe.

Sometimes there is a disposition to omit the stated observance of this great privilege. This cannot be done without manifest injury to the soul. Sometimes other occupations seem to demand the whole of our attention, so that we cannot be engaged in prayer so much as we would really like. The old proverb is true, "Prayer and provender hinder no man." The more we have to do, the more hours should be spent in meditation and supplication. By observing this rule, we will really accomplish more

than if the duty were omitted. We can learn to pray in the midst of other employments. We can live in the spirit of prayer. This is what pleases the Savior. It is not the formal duty punctually performed that receives his commendation, so much as the fact that the soul delights in the occupation.

ABIDING IN CHRIST.

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.” (Jn. 15:4, 5.) The chapter from which these words are taken is full of references to this important point. Paul makes this one of the special petitions in his celebrated prayer, (Eph. 3:17.) “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” “He is your life.” “Your life is hid with Christ in God.” (Col. 3:3.) Christ is the Bread of Life. (Jn. 6:33.) “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20.)

It is marvelous that the Savior deigns to dwell within us. How we ought to cherish his presence, and make the most of this unspeakable blessing! To realize this one fact in all its fulness would fill us with rejoicing. It is because we do not realize it that we ever become dejected and unhappy. He is a living power in the soul just in proportion as we enter into the possession of this thought. It is a thought which can only be grasped by faith.

FEEDING ON THE WORD.

Jeremiah says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." (Jer. 15:16.) The soul is nourished by the truth. Paul said to Timothy, "Give attention to doctrine." (1 Tim. 4:13.) Neglect of the written word will show itself in languishing faith and decreasing energy in service. In some hidden way our strength is renewed as we peruse the sacred page in faith. It is the conveyer of blessing. We need its milk and its strong meat to make us spiritually robust. In the Bible the soul finds its best pasturage. It provides us with the manna from heaven.

This is especially true of Christ as the Word in an embodied form. The written word finds its complement in the personal Word. The soul

should not be deprived of its daily portion, any more than we would think of robbing the body of its daily meals.

STEADINESS OF PURPOSE.

In order to the maintenance of the soul's equanimity there must be an inflexible purpose to be true to God and His word. This attitude of mind is not antagonistic to the idea of passivity previously mentioned. Of all things we should avoid a vacillating state of mind. In the true christian life there is stability, robustness, steadfastness. Religion is not a mere set of emotions. It is based on sure principles. To be a true christian one needs to be possessed of the highest manhood or womanhood. This necessitates earnestness of purpose and resolution. There is no other way of securing continuity of feeling. Without this we will be creatures of impulse, tossed about by every passing wind. The mind needs to be held to its purpose as a ship is held to the wind.

To some this is a difficult accomplishment. They are not naturally possessed of strong wills. Tenacity of purpose is to them an unknown quantity. But even if we are not possessed of strong wills, if the heart's love is true, this will secure the same end.

It is not a mere question of will. Some of the most steadfast in the christian life are naturally timid and undemonstrative. Indeed, it is by no means certain that the possession of a strong will is not one of the greatest hindrances to the enjoyment of God's presence and the blessing referred to. Willful persons find it exceeding difficult to abide in Christ and to preserve peacefulness of soul. But every christian needs to be able to say, with the Psalmist, "My heart is fixed."

PRESERVING INWARD RECOLLECTION.

By this we mean the habit of spiritual equanimity, that composure of mind and inward consciousness of the divine presence which manifests itself in the possession of the peace of God. In this state of recollection we realize the immediate help of the divine Spirit in giving us strength for each emergency of life as it arises. It grows out of the habit of making God our constant counsellor in the discharge of duty, in the direction of our affairs, and in all the experiences of the soul. It stands parallel with mental discipline and self-control in the mentally great. It is, however, purely a spiritual attainment.

Only the more advanced followers of Christ know this blessed experience. Christ exhibited it in its highest perfection. How calm and self-complacent in the midst of strife and confusion! We never find him taken off his guard. He always spoke with a dignity and composure that commanded the confidence and admiration of those who beheld him. It was because of this inward recollection that the officers sent to arrest him said, "Never man spake like this man." It awed men into submission.

Of course in us it is but imperfectly exhibited at its best. But it is undoubtedly our privilege to enter measurably into the possession of this trait of christian character. It will make us superior to the ills and annoyances of life. It will clothe us with an authority in the utterance of divine truth which we could not otherwise have. We need it in order to the avoidance of mistake in the prosecution of our work. It is, in some sense, the same as the inward direction of the Spirit; only it refers to the results of such direction as manifest in us. It is a higher form or manifestation of what we commonly denominate decision of character. It is born of devotion. It is the gift of the Spirit. Its chief attraction and value lie in the fact that it frees the soul from all turbulence and distraction and enables us to do our best.

LIVING BY THE MOMENT.

This furnishes us with the key to the possession of inward recollection. The soul, moment by moment, preserves its vital contact with the Savior. The wires are kept unbroken, so that the current of life flows unhindered through the soul. The heart is kept insulated from the world, so that the vital fluid is not lost.

This is the true way of living. We are no more than what we are at this present moment. We are not so likely to depend on a past experience of grace and blessing. We draw our joy and comfort from present union with Christ and from actual reception of his favor in daily experience. The plant draws its life from the soil without interruption. If there were any cessation of the process of capillary attraction its death would be certain. So with the soul. This is true as a matter of fact, whether we realize it or not. But it is conscious, rather than unconscious, union with Christ. Life is exalted into sublimity when it is thus directed. It has a significance which it does not have without it. Heaven becomes a reality to the soul.

This habit fosters and necessitates faith. Faith as an energizing power has no value except for the

present moment. God never bestows grace for tomorrow. "*As thy day thy strength shall be.*" "Give us *this day* our *daily* bread." God does not lay up great storehouses of provision for the soul, from which we can draw without daily prayer. As He does not give dying grace until the hour of death, so He does not bestow spiritual help except as we need it. His whole kingdom is built on this principle of living by the moment. As Fenelon says, "Happy is the man who retains nothing in his mind but what is necessary, and who only thinks of each thing just when it is the time to think of it; so that it is rather God who excites the perception and idea of it by an impression and discovery of His will which we must perform, than the mind's being at the trouble to forecast and find it." It is living and walking by faith.

CHAPTER VI.

For What Purpose is the Joy of Salvation Given?

ALL blessings divinely bestowed have a practical design in view. There is some useful end to be subserved by the joy of salvation. What is that end? This inquiry may well command our attention in this closing chapter.

TO GIVE A FORETASTE OF HEAVEN.

Salvation is deliverance from sin. Sin has wrought terrible disaster in the world. It has ruined many hearts and homes. The evil principle set in operation by our first parents has worked like leaven in the hearts of men and in society. It has dashed onward like a mad wave of seething corruption, threatening to involve the whole race in disaster. For centuries divine power and wisdom have been occupied with the great task of its eradication and the deliverance of men from its

dominion. Offers of pardon and promises of grace were despised by the millions of the human race. But a few were persuaded to accept these offers. Their number has greatly increased as the years have rolled on. Our heavenly Father, in the plenitude of His grace, has multiplied blessing upon blessing to those who were willing to be saved. He has granted to them blessed foretastes of the joys in store for them. As we grow in capacity for receiving His blessings He has bestowed them upon us. From them that love Him He withholds no good thing. He lavishes upon them the riches of His love and mercy.

These gracious experiences are only presages of what is to be, that, tasting them, they might not be drawn back to the beggarly elements of the world and be destroyed. But they are of such a character that they do really afford us a foretaste of the joys of the heavenly world. It is because of the Father's love for us that they are given. And so rich are they to those who are faithful that their life in this world is made almost a heaven because of them.

AN INCENTIVE TO HIGHER ATTAINMENTS.

We reason that if they are so rich and full here, what will the future world bring to our possession

when we stand in the presence of the King and behold His glory? We find that as we make progress in the life divine we are made happier, and are the recipients of multiplied proofs of the divine favor. This is an incentive to higher attainments and more earnest endeavor. As we increase in knowledge of the truth and in experience of its power, we hunger and thirst after more grace and blessing. As we realize the Father's willingness to bless, and the fact that his resources are infinite, we are led to come with larger requests and expectations.

This is God's design. He says that if we ask we shall receive, that if we seek we shall find, that if we knock it will be opened unto us. Giving doth not impoverish him, and withholding doth not enrich him. So we come with larger petitions. As this promotes our growth the blessings are continued to us. This not only inspires us with hope, but also with earnest endeavor to make the most of our opportunities and advantages. We are actuated by the desire to please Him who is so kind in the bestowment of his favors.

Were it not for these blessings of the christian life, how many of us would grow weary in well-doing! How many would turn their backs on the kingdom! The simple hope of future reward, while

it might be sufficient with many to keep them from relaxing in effort, would hardly be sufficient to keep the masses of men in the ranks. If there were no victories in the terrible combat until we were laid low in death, the prospect, however glowing in words, would not be very encouraging. Many would give up in despair.

But God gives us victories as we pass along. He cheers us by the way lest we should become faint-hearted. He fills our souls with the raptures of heavenly joy, knowing that they will kindle more ardent desires and incite to more earnest effort.

We hardly realize to what extent we are influenced by the anticipation of rewards. Christ himself was so influenced. "Who, for the reward that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." (Heb. 12:2.) The Bible fully recognizes the wisdom of offering rewards. All our joys in heaven are of this character, albeit they are totally undeserved. Hope is a grand incentive, especially when, as in the case of the Gospel, there is also a present enjoyment of blessing, a foretaste of what is to come.

AS AN ELEMENT OF WORSHIP.

The place accorded to praise in the services of God's house has great significance. We are com-

manded to come into his presence with joy and singing, "making melody in your heart to the Lord." Can one worship in any proper sense without this element of rejoicing? It is altogether doubtful. Thanksgiving is enjoined upon us in God's Word repeatedly. Prayer is always to be accompanied with thanksgiving. The command to us is, "Praise ye the Lord, for it is good to sing praises unto our God, and praise is comely." (Ps. 147:1.) And our response should be, "While I live will I praise the Lord; I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being." (Ps. 146:2.) The Psalms, as well as other portions of scripture, are full of exhortations to praise. It is this element that makes our worship acceptable to the Father. He who comes before God simply as a duty may enjoy the service after a fashion, but not as the one whose soul overflows with thanksgiving and praise.

Too little of this joy is manifest in our worship. The feeling of solemnity and awe is allowed to suppress joyful expression of our love. It would be well for some of us if we would break over the barriers of early prejudice and allow ourselves even to shout for joy. It would introduce an element of freedom that is too often lacking.

AS A PREPARATION FOR HEAVEN.

The idea that we are to be wholly occupied, in the heavenly world, with praise is doubtless wrong, especially if it means that we are to do nothing but play upon our harps. But there will doubtless be a good deal of music around the throne. The angels and saints are engaged in singing the songs of Moses and the Lamb. We will at least have to learn that song. Heaven will be full of joys. We had better take some lessons in music before going. Praise does much towards giving us that preparation for heaven which we need.

We sometimes wonder what gives the Gospel such a hold upon the masses of men. Essentially it is, of course, the message it contains of salvation; but not a little of its success is due to the service of song. Without music we could not long hold the attention of our hearers. They meet with the largest measure of success, other things being equal, who have a great deal of singing. Revival services would soon languish without this element of inspiration and help.

We are not only to "let the peace of God rule in our hearts," and to "let the word of Christ dwell in us richly," but we are to praise God "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with

grace in our hearts to the Lord." (Col. 3:16.) One of the results of being filled with the Spirit is implied in the words, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Eph. 5:9.) God evidently desires to have us become accustomed to praise and thanksgiving before we enter the heavenly portals.

TO INCREASE OUR FAITH.

It has this effect because it is a partial fulfillment of the promise of God's word. We are permitted not merely to expect the bestowment of blessing when we enter upon the unseen life, but to taste some of these joys beforehand. The experience of them exerts a marvelous influence on our faith. We feel certain, from what we know already, that there are infinite resources of delight in God's possession, and that He is willing to grant us the enjoyment of them. Faith not only leads to experience, but experience enhances faith. This is natural. The more of comfort we have in dear friends, the greater our faith in them. The more we experience of the joy of salvation, the greater our confidence in the Father and His love.

TO ATTRACT THE SINNER'S ATTENTION.

There is deep significance to be attached to the words of the Apostle Paul, (1 Cor. 14:24, 25,) "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." This is especially true when the subject of our prophesying is the joy of salvation, testifying to what the Lord has done for our souls. The fact that our souls are full of this joy cannot but attract the attention of unbelievers. They will naturally seek some explanation of the fact. And the conviction will soon steal over them, if we have the real joy of salvation in our hearts, that we have something that is not only desirable, but which they themselves know nothing about. This explains the wonderful power of testimony, and why the Lord insists upon it. Religion is always joyful. If it seems to be destitute of this element, it is because we have a wrong conception of its nature or an imperfect experience of its influence.

This makes it all the more obligatory on the followers of Christ to manifest the joy of their souls. Even if we never say a word for Christ (although

that would seem very strange) we can give evidence of the possession of an experience that is worth seeking. How many might be led to Christ if we were faithful in this respect!

TO EQUIP FOR WORK.

This is the supreme object to be accomplished in the bestowment of the joy of salvation. The church has a great work laid on her hands to do. The preparation required for this work is not merely intellectual, or physical. It is purely spiritual. "Restore unto me the joy of Thy Salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit; then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners will be converted unto Thee." We need the blessing in order to our being furnished for our work. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." When we are joyful it is easy to work, and we accomplish a great deal more good. The fact of this joy in our souls indicates that God's Spirit is with us and that He is preparing us for our work. We would render a very poor service if we had no joy in it, if it were done from a mere sense of duty.

The words spoken by us are nothing unless they well up from the soul as from an inexhaustible fountain. Was not this the Savior's meaning when he said to the woman of Samaria, "The water that

I shall give shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life?" It is not mere truth that convinces and converts, but the truth as seen in loving natures, as uttered by joyful hearts.

This joy is the

THE ROOT OF OUR ZEAL.

It fills us with enthusiasm in the prosecution of our work. It explains our love for souls. It sustains our spirit of endurance. What is the christian without enthusiasm? What is the church without zeal? It creates an interest in others that qualifies us for teaching them the truths of God's word. "*Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways.*"

We cannot lay too great emphasis on this fact. There is a mysterious philosophy in the influence of the joy of salvation on our lives. It is something infinitely above ordinary joy. That it has this effect is evident from the testimony of the most successful workers. It was doubtless designed for this purpose. Under the influence of this joy the burden is lifted from us, and we count it a privilege to do the Savior's will. Under its domination we seek after opportunities to make known the grace of God in Christ. We love to direct souls to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. This joy is a divine impulse in the soul.

This joy works mysteriously. Even in the midst of our griefs and sorrows, when the heart seems utterly disconsolate, if we listen we will discover an undertone of joy that is trying to give itself expression in a song of praise. The element of woe cannot long overwhelm us when the joy of salvation exists in the soul. The clouds of gloom are soon brushed away. All is sunshine, to the extent that we allow this joy to control us. Cares sit lightly upon us. It makes us brave and strong. It disarms those who would oppose us. It brings to our possession the very power of God. It makes us children of the King, the real sons of God. It puts the crown of life upon our heads. It encircles us with a halo of glory. Let us pray for it. Let us cherish it in our hearts. Let us use it to exalt him who gave himself for us, and whose blood cleanseth us from all sin. Let it inspire us to nobler zeal and energy in the Master's service, and in doing the work of the church in the world.

THE GRAND RESULT.

“And sinners shall be converted unto Thee.” With this overflowing joy in the heart, working itself out into deeds of love, our labors are sure not to be in vain. Our prayers will be answered. The one grand desire of our souls, the conversion of men

to Christ, will be fulfilled. This is the divine assurance, as well as the feeling of David's heart. The proper conditions being fulfilled, the great result is certain.

What is needed, then, to bring the world to Christ? Only this, a church whose members are filled with the joy of salvation and who, with a willing spirit, undertake the work of instructing them and leading them to the Savior. The whole responsibility, therefore, rests upon us individually, What is our wish? What is our purpose? The Spirit waits to lead. Are we ready to follow? Or do we still hesitate to take the first step? "My Spirit will not always strive with men." The Spirit may be grieved away from the heart.

MORE JOY.

"He shall come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." (Ps. 126:6.) This is joy renewed and enriched. There is another kind of joy that results from this gathering in of souls, "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." (Luke 15:10.) Thus heaven and earth will be filled with rejoicing. And the Savior's heart will certainly be made glad by this accession of precious souls to the heavenly kingdom. Shall we not, then, seek to possess ourselves of this joy?

THE HERESY OF THE HEART.

The Heresy of the Heart.

Nevertheless I have this against thee that thou hast left thy first love. Rev. 2:4.

THESE are various kinds of heresy in the world. There is doctrinal or intellectual heresy, which relates to belief. There is the heresy of conduct, which refers to immorality of life. But the most dangerous, and that to which all other heresies can be traced, is that of the heart. The text clearly and explicitly refers to this. "I have *this* against thee *that thou hast left thy first love.*"

These words are addressed to the church at Ephesus, one of the seven churches of Asia to which letters were specially directed by the Spirit after our Savior's ascension. It was in many particulars a remarkable church. It was organized by the Apostle Paul. For a time Timothy was its Bishop. For many years it was honored as the ecclesiastical home of the Apostle John. It was for a time con-

spicuous for its fidelity and the spirituality of its membership. The Spirit expressly notes some of its commendable qualities in this letter. "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are Apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne and hast patience; and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted." (v. 2, 3.) It was evidently an active church. It was not at ease with reference to the demands of christian work. Planted, as it was, in the midst of a heathenish community, in a city devoted to the worship of Diana, it could not be blind to the necessity of earnest effort. Clearly its members had tried to be equal to the emergency.

In confirmation of this statement with reference to the character of the church we have only to appeal to the Epistle directed to it by the Apostle Paul. He says, "Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." (1:15, 16.) In this epistle are some of the most tender appeals. It contains many practical instructions; but it also contains some of the deepest and richest spiritual truths to be found in the Bible. This is sufficient

to show that its members were in some sense capable of appreciating them. And this means that they had made considerable progress in the divine life.

“*Nevertheless*” the Lord had somewhat against this church. It had not come up fully to the mark in exemplifying divine truth and character. The complaint is not that it had desisted from christian effort, nor that it did not attend on the services of God’s house, nor that its contributions were meagre and parsimonious, nor that it was given to worldly pleasures, but simply that it had left its first love.

How many churches of to-day would stand acquitted if tested in the same way? How many would feel perfectly satisfied if they could come up to the standard actually maintained by this church and recognized in connection with its solemn impeachment? If a church is only active in what is called church work, in holding meetings, in doing mission work, in maintaining sociables and fairs and festivals, in sustaining temperance bands and boys’ brigades and sewing circles, how apt we are to commend it in the highest terms, speaking of it as remarkably successful and enterprising and prosperous. Yet it may be a total failure in the Lord’s sight. Mere activity is not religion. Everything turns on the impelling motive. Is it inspired by

love for Christ? Is there real and heartfelt worship in it all? These are the questions that should be propounded with reference to all church activity. What we want is the Savior's commendation, 'This we cannot have without love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Religion is nothing without love. No service is acceptable that does not spring from the heart

That word "nevertheless" carries with it an important meaning. It is not to be passed by as unworthy of notice. It may seal our condemnation to all eternity. Naaman was a great man, *but* he was a leper. Solomon was the wisest of men, *but* his wives turned away his heart from God. David was a man after God's own heart, *but* he sinned. Peter was full of zeal, *but* he denied his Master even with an oath. A man is a splendid book-keeper, *but* he is dishonest. This young lady is industrious, *but* she is proud and selfish. This man gives largely and liberally to the benevolent boards of the church, *but* he has a self-righteous motive in it all. This church is active and zealous and patient and hates evil, *nevertheless* it has left its first love. This man came to the wedding feast, *nevertheless* he was cast out, because he had not on a wedding garment.

The Lord deals with churches in their collective capacity. If they are to be punished it must be in this life. It is on the same principle that He deals with nations. Individuals are not always adequately punished in this life for their transgressions. The severest penalty of sin is executed in the unseen world. Not so with churches. Their rewards and punishments all come in this life. In this case the threatened penalty was the removing of its candlestick out of its place.

A candlestick is designed to hold that which gives forth light. If it is used as a vase to hold flowers, no matter how beautiful and ornamental it may appear, it is being perverted to a wrong use. If it is most beautifully decorated and burnished and kept in its proper place, this will not suffice. It must give forth the light of life. If it is not so used it will be removed. The church will then cease to be a church in any spiritual sense. It will only have a name to live. It will exert no healthful influence in the community in which it is planted. When a church ceases to do the Lord's work from right motives, when the hearts of its members become cold and indifferent, when they turn their attention away from the gospel to other things, when it becomes formal in its devotions, no matter how much it may do for the

people in the way of intellectual diversion and entertainment, no matter how much of culture and refinement there may be in its services, it cannot be doing the Lord's work, and therefore must meet with his disapproval. In time its candlestick will be removed. Its light has become extinguished, of what use can it be in a world that is full of spiritual darkness?

God certainly takes account of the faithfulness of churches. He makes inquiry as to their true success. The entries are all made on the balance sheet. There is a debit and a credit side to the account. They will be suitably rewarded for all that is good in them and their work, but they will also have to answer for all that is wrong, for their failures to come up to what is required, for their lack of love for the Savior and his truth, as well as for overt transgressions.

The church is dear to the Lord as the apple of his eye. Of her He says, "Behold I have graven thee on the palms of my hand." (Isa. 49:16.) He cannot be indifferent to her derelictions, especially those of the heart. He notices the least spiritual declension. He marks every sign of retrogression. He is deeply concerned for the character of every church planted in his name. He will deal faithfully with every one of them, even to cut-

ting them off when they have gone beyond recovery.

We are accustomed to saying that "corporations have no souls." But churches seem to be thus endowed, in some sense. Precious interests are committed to their charge. They are expected to be faithful. They are chastened, like individuals, when they wander from the right path. An unfaithful church is a positive hindrance to the progress of Christ's cause. If it is not leading men into the kingdom, it is keeping them out. If it is not a dispenser of light, it is a communicator of darkness. If it is not the exponent of truth and virtue and righteousness, it is of falsehood and vice and corruption. God will not own a church that is destitute of true christian character.

But a church is made up of individual members. The text is therefore designed to have a personal application. The worth of a church cannot be greater than the aggregate worth of its members. The first love of a church is that of its individual adherents. If each one of its communicants maintains a true attitude of heart toward God and His work there will be no dereliction. If each individual makes a point never to recede from the true line of rectitude and spirituality there will be no retrocession in the church. Hence our text can be

more profitably applied by considering it in its individual or personal applications.

What is meant by the expression "first love"? Evidently it refers to the first glow of love that fills the heart at the time of conversion. How joyful we were at that supreme moment in our spiritual history when we gave our hearts, in glad consecration, to the Savior! when we felt the sweet consciousness of his presence! when we were thrilled with the assurance of sins forgiven! when the peace of God, which passeth understanding, filled the soul! How eager we were to lead souls to Christ! How easy to speak a word for Jesus! How delightful the services of the sanctuary! With what pleasure we perused the sacred word! How we loved the Savior! He was to us the chief among ten thousand and the One altogether lovely. These are characteristics of every genuine conversion. These were the indications of our "first love."

Are they still true of us? Or have we fallen from this ecstatic state of bliss? Do we still enjoy the Savior's presence? Or has the world crept into the heart to such an extent that we often forget that he is near? Are we still thrilled with his love, shed abroad in the heart by the power of the Spirit? Or have other loves drawn us away from him? An honest answer to these inquiries will reveal whether

we have left our first love or not. We need not remain long in doubt as to the fact.

If the husband or wife continues to love, each the other, as at the first, there will be no occasion for dissatisfaction. It is when one or the other grows cold and careless that trouble begins. Suspicions take the place of confidences. Complaints take the place of tender expressions. Bitter feelings crowd out the true spirit of affection. Alienation follows as the natural result. Disaffection often leads to separation. The maintenance of the "first love" is of the utmost importance, in order to matrimonial happiness. The analogy between this and the soul's love for Christ is complete. There is authority for it in the Word of God. Christ is the Bridegroom, the church is the bride.

Now as to the relation that exists between Christ and the souls of believers, if there is any interruption or defection, it cannot be His fault, it must be ours. He never loses interest in us. His love never grows cold toward us. It is ours that grows cold toward Him.

Never will the writer forget the words of one of the professors in the college in which he received his training; said he, "Every morning bring your heart into loving contact with the loving heart of Jesus" If christians were careful to observe this

simple rule, there would be no spiritual declension, no loss in the early fervency of their love, no exposure to the dreadful alternative of having our candlestick removed.

Evidently the Savior expects that this first love shall be unintermittent. We are apt to say it is impossible to be always on the top of the Mount; that there must be ups and downs in our experience. But are not these ups and downs generally the result of our lack of faith and consecration? This may explain any diminution in joy or comfort, but it could not excuse any diminution of love. The Savior is always lovable. His promises are always ours. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. His Word never changes. All that is needed is the faith to believe it and rest in it. "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full." (Jn. 15:11.)

Yet many christians have occasion to repeat the words of the hymn :

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word?

"Those peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."

It would be well for such if they could follow the directions of this hymn, contained in the following verses :

“Return, O holy Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,
And drove Thee from my breast.

“The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee.

“So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame;
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb.”

It is all a question of abiding in Christ. “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” (Jn. 15:7.) “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” (v. 4.) We have no life apart from him. In him are all the vital sources of strength to the soul. And it is only by faith that we can abide in him.

I hold in my hand a rose. It is beautiful to look upon. It seems as fresh and lovely as when it was plucked from the vine. But as I look at it closely it begins to show marks of decay. The faint lines of decadence are already visible. There is enough

life in the stem to keep it from absolute death for a day or two. If placed in a vase with water in it its life may be prolonged several days. But in a little while it will wither away, and then it will be cast out, to be trodden under foot of men as a worthless thing. All this because it is separated from the vine. There is no flow of the life-current to its petals from the mother stem. It is sure to die.

So it is with the christian when he ceases to draw life from Christ, if such a thing be possible. The continuance of the first love is proof that we are still united to the Vine. When that diminishes there is some sort of separation from Him. Thus this love is a spiritual indicator to the soul.

Yet just here there is need of discrimination. Our love may be just as genuine and just as fervent, even if it is not marked by the same thrilling excitement that was felt at the time of our conversion. It was not the love that was excited, but the feelings that grew out of that love. True love shows itself in obedience and faithfulness, not in mere ardency, which may subside with change of circumstances.

The Savior does not want us to be feeding upon a past experience. If we decline from our first love we will surely be looking back to that first experience with longing for its return. But if our

love is just as fervent as at first there will be no disposition to do so. Really it is the joy and the peace that we miss. These can be restored only by having our love restored. This is what the Psalmist means when he prays, "Renew a right a spirit within me."

There is only one remedy for this state of things. That is indicated in the context. "*Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.*" The *first love* can only be regained by doing the *first works*. Repentance is one of these. It must therefore be a sin to depart from our first love. This sin can only be forgiven on the basis of repentance. But we have the distinct promise to God's people, "If we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn. 1:9.) God is always willing to receive us back into the arms of His love, when we return in penitence. He is always willing to give us another chance, when we ask it. It is only when the soul utterly refuses to return that it is cut off as a dead branch from the vine. As Dr. Parker says, "The Lord will never give up a man until that man literally *wrenches himself out of the divine grasp.*"

As to this heresy of the heart, it may be remarked in general,

1. *That it is insidious and deceptive in its growth.*

Sometimes it seems almost impossible to discover the reason for it. In our searchings for the cause we are very sure to look in the wrong direction and to ascribe to it an imaginary origin. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." All sin is deceitful. It steals upon the heart, like an assassin who would make sure of his deadly deed without opposition or even suspicion of evil. For a time we are apt to think there is nothing wrong. We see no necessity for alarm. We do not dream that an enemy is lurking near. We quiet our fears and apprehensions. But, almost before we are aware of it, the work is accomplished. We are like the consumptive who will not admit that the fatal disease has become rooted in his system till the very last moment of life. Then, perhaps, it is impossible to secure recovery. Well does the Apostle exhort us to "take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God," "Let him that thinketh that he standeth take heed lest he fall."

2. *The process is gradual.*

The result is not accomplished in a day, perhaps not in a year. All backsliding is gradual. Step by step we recede from the right path. Step by

step we lose interest in the truth. Step by step we yield to bad habits. Indeed the process is usually so slow that it is scarcely observed till it has reached its more dangerous stages. At first we simply neglect this or that christian duty or privilege. Then this careless spirit becomes more pronounced. Conscience is allowed to slumber. Then overt transgressions are committed, at first with great reluctance, then with ease. By and by we awake to discover that the soul has lost its moorings and is at the mercy of the tide of evil.

3. *It is more or less voluntary.*

If this were not the case we would not be held answerable for it as a sin. Sin can make no advance except with our consent. We listen to the tempter's voice. The eye is allowed to follow after his allurements. We consent to forbidden things. We cease to be watchful against evil. We neglect to resist it when it approaches the heart. "*Thou hast left thy first love.*" The warning and the threatened penalty imply responsibility for the result. There is a sense in which we may say, as Paul did (Rom. 7:17), "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." But if there is, as in his case, a real hatred for sin, the voluntary element is eliminated. If after we discover that we

have wandered we refuse to return, then we consent to the allowance of sin. God will help us so long as we struggle against evil. But if we choose to remain in our sins there is no help for us.

4. *Heresy of the heart involves deprivation of blessing.*

No christian can be happy while consenting to the alienation of his feelings from God. It robs the soul of all spiritual comfort. There is no longer any delight in prayer or praise. Communion with God becomes distasteful, if not impossible. The offender avoids the company of believers as a source of annoyance and reproach. He can no longer trust in the Father's love or protection. The thought that God's eye is upon him only terrifies his soul. There is "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." The sources of supply are cut off from the soul. Remorse takes the place of comfort. Misery takes full possession of the heart. The memory of better days and better experiences only kindles anew the flames of torture. Oh how sad the condition of those who have thus become alienated from spiritual things!

5. The reason for this lies in the fact that *this state of heart necessarily separates from Christ.*

“Without faith it is impossible to please God.” Too great emphasis cannot be given to the necessity of union with Christ. The true disciple delights in fellowship with him. It is painful to him to have anything come between Christ and his soul. It is like being shut in from the light of day. He is happy only as he is conscious of the Savior’s smile resting upon him. He mourns the least hiding of his face. He cannot rest until he is restored to His favor. This separation touches every part of his spiritual being. It affects his daily life and usefulness. Herein we find the explanation of the spiritual darkness under which so many suffer. All burdens become heavier when Christ withdraws his help.

6. This heresy of the heart is a fatal malady unless speedily cured.

We should watch the very first developments of the disease. The flood that broke through the levee might have been stayed in the first few minutes after the earth began to give way. The great conflagration might have been extinguished if water had been poured upon it at the start. If one has resisted the very first entrance of evil thoughts and desires into his heart he will not need to pass through the terrible struggles of him who has for years given

welcome to such imaginations, in order to their expulsion. Such an one is apt to feel that the struggle is hopeless. When any disease becomes chronic it is difficult, if not impossible, to heal it.

We should be far more concerned about the heart than the head in spiritual matters. There are more heretics in the church to-day than many suspect; disciples who have grown cold and careless, who have lost interest in Christ's service and worship, who have wandered far away from the fold, who are in the enemy's camp, who have betrayed their Lord and Master just as truly as Judas did. They have a name to live, but are dead. They are counted among the followers of the Savior, but they are only nominally such. Most of them are never called to account. They are not summoned to answer any charges of heresy. There is no edict of expulsion issued against them. If the church would rid herself of these her standing would be better in the eyes of a contemptuous world.

Every pastor and church, every council and presbytery and conference, has a work to do in this direction, or in reclaiming these wanderers, that is of the utmost importance. Let it not be slighted. A word of warning, an earnest entreaty, may be all that is needed to bring them back to their former allegiance. Pray for them, be faithful to them and

to the Master who has commissioned you. He was willing to leave the ninety and nine that he might find and save the *one* lost sheep.

Oh how watchful we need to be of the heart! How easily it is led astray! How open to the assaults of the tempter! "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" The heart is a fountain of life or of death. From it the life blood is carried to every extremity of the physical frame. If the blood is impure the whole system is liable to be infected with disease. Many die of blood poisoning. But if the blood is pure it guarantees health and strength.

Yonder spring at the foot of the hill, how precious its cooling waters to those who are dependent upon it for daily supply! Many a weary traveler has slaked his thirst at its brink. But suppose, like the well which Elisha healed, its waters were to become bitter and poisonous! It would then be a fountain of death. How carefully men guard their wells and springs! If they were half as watchful of their hearts their spiritual security would be more sure.

Satan is a cunning strategist. He does not waste his time in conquering the outposts, only as this is necessary in order to get at the heart. It is the citadel itself that he wishes to subdue. Here he

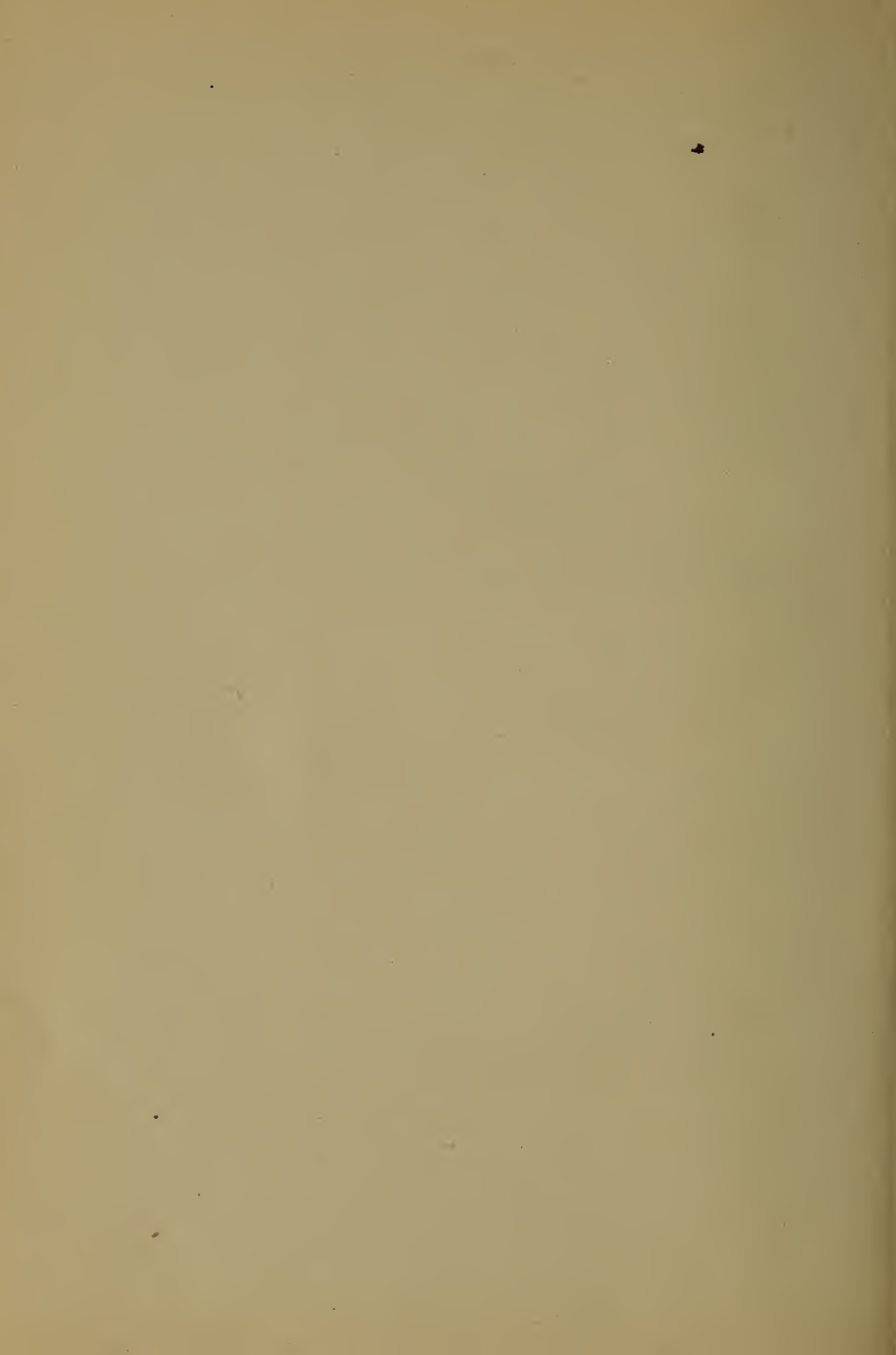
brings his heaviest ordnance. Here he does his most skillful engineering. He plots and manœuvres to find a way of entrance. When once within he sows the most deadly seeds. He fills it with impure imaginations. He pollutes its best affections, till it becomes as a cage of unclean birds, a foul and loathsome pesthouse. Then it will seal its own doom.

It is said of Robespierre, the French leader, who became so infamous and was noted for the horrible atrocities he committed during the revolution, that in his early manhood he was conspicuous for his amiability of spirit. He was loved and respected by all who knew him. He even wrote a book on the code of criminal jurisprudence, in which he expressed regret that it was so sanguinary, and suggested means for its amelioration. But in some way evil got possession of his heart and he became cruel and vindictive, a very tyrant. As Spurgeon says, "There is enough timber in the heart of the best men in the world to light a fire that shall burn to the lowest hell, unless God should quench the sparks as they fall." When Hazael was told by the prophet that he would slay his master he said, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" Yet he did as the prophet said he would.

Luther said he was more afraid of his heart than of the Pope and all his cardinals. How many evil influences are striving for its possession! Pleasure makes its joyful appeal. Riches hold out their entrancing allurements. The devil wants it. Christ wants it. Whose shall it be? Shall we give it to the service of sin, or to the service of holiness? Shall we guard it as a precious treasure, or shall we let it take care of itself? Would it not be wise to place it in the keeping of the Savior? He will preserve it from all danger. He will fill it with thoughts of benevolence and affection. He will adorn it as a palace with every ornament that is beautiful. He will enrapture it with the joy that is unspeakable and the peace that passeth all understanding. Then it will not be exposed to the danger of this destructive heresy about which we have been talking.

How different the Lord's judgment from that of the world! Men take cognizance of our acts. They observe our conduct. Seldom do they scrutinize the inner sanctuary of motive, feeling, purpose. Christ looks upon the heart. He is in search of jewels. He wants nothing that is not born of love. And how sad he is when he discovers that we are lacking in this supreme quality! Rest assured that the most punctilious observance of outward forms

can never take the place of heart service. And let us ever remember that there is no process of concealment from divine knowledge. "O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou understandest my thought afar off, and art acquainted with all my ways." If we are pure in our desires, true in our motives, he will not concern himself about our mistakes and failures. While careful to avoid the heresy of belief, let us be doubly watchful against that kind of heresy, which has its origin in the heart, and which evidences itself in diminishing love.



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